

# Sight and Sound

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**In Jo'burg** with Elaine  
Proctor's **'Friends'**  
**Bill Viola:** visionary video  
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# Sight and Sound



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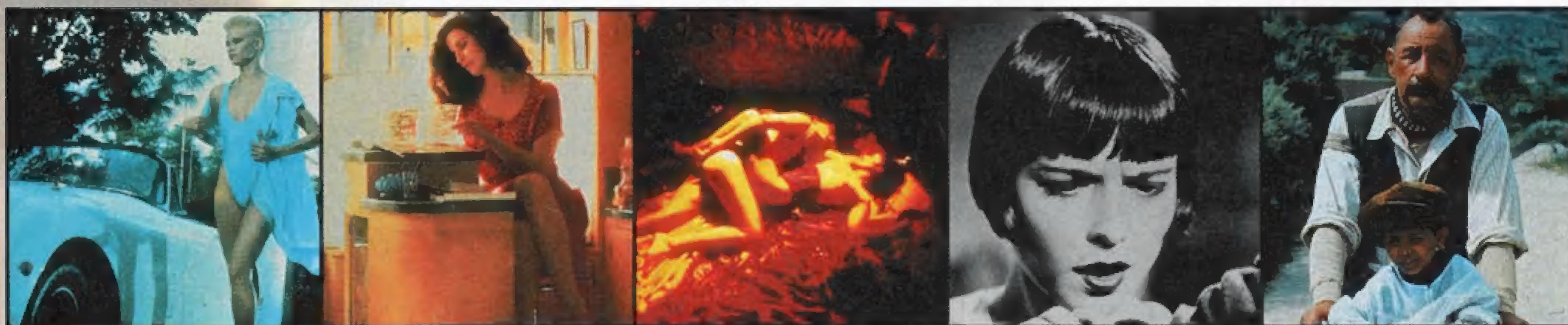


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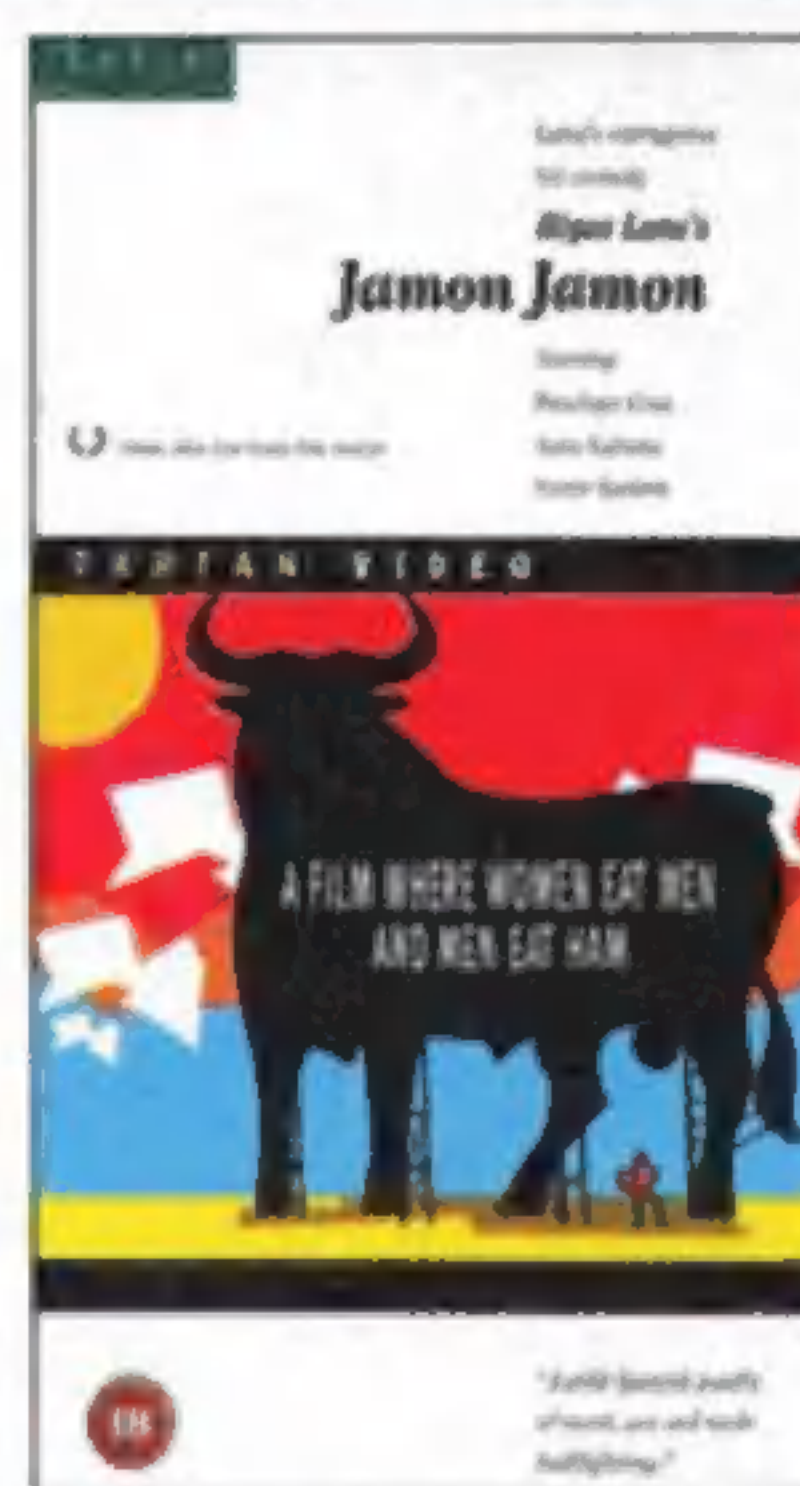
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# Rewinding the panic

## Contributors to this issue

**Michael Atkinson** is a New York-based freelance critic  
**Ramsey Campbell** is a horror writer and broadcaster whose books include *Incarnate* and *Waking Nightmares*

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**Paul Julian Smith** is Professor of Spanish at the University of Cambridge. His book *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar* will be published in February

**Chris Wagstaff** teaches, Italian at Reading University

The starting gun for the latest wave of hysteria over children's access to video was fired dramatically by Mr Justice Morland. Passing sentence on the two 11-year-old boys convicted of the abduction and murder of James Bulger, he remarked, "It is not for me to pass judgment on their upbringing, but I suspect that exposure to violent video films may in part be an explanation."

The tabloids were quick to respond. But what made this occasion different was that the outrage was not generalised, as it had been in the 'video nasty' scares of the 80s. Rather, it was focused on the specific effects attributed to one particular horror video, *Child's Play 3*, which had been rented by the father of one of the boys, Jon Venables, prior to the murder. The argument advanced in the *Mirror*, *Today*, the *Mail* and the *Sun* – the latter using stills from the film – was that elements of the story seemed to parallel details of the Bulger killing. In this way, what is perhaps the most complex, baffling and disturbing criminal case of recent years was treated by the tabloids, and the MPs who followed suit, as if it were merely the fallout from a second-rate horror movie.

The coverage immediately pressed the panic button, the *Sun* going so far as to recommend that all copies of the film be burnt. There was more than a whiff of hypocrisy in the paper's outrage, since the film was, coincidentally, due to be broadcast on Sky Television the day after the verdict.

We are thus back in that barren territory in which violent films – and more particularly videos – are routinely assigned the blame for criminality. And as yet, there is little sign of a reasoned debate taking place. With the recent outcry came pressure on the Home Secretary to review current controls and to be seen to be acting tough. However, Michael Howard announced that he was determined not to make a snap judgment and bought himself some time

by suggesting that he was waiting for the results of research commissioned by the BBFC.

Although he described this in Parliament rather grandly as "the first independent research for 20 years into the viewing habits of young offenders", in reality it is a very modest study which has asked a small group of offenders what sort of television programmes and films they generally watch and which are their favourites. This research should tell us whether the viewing habits and preferences of offenders are different from those of other children. It will not explain what part, if any, violent videos play in influencing the behaviour of violent children.

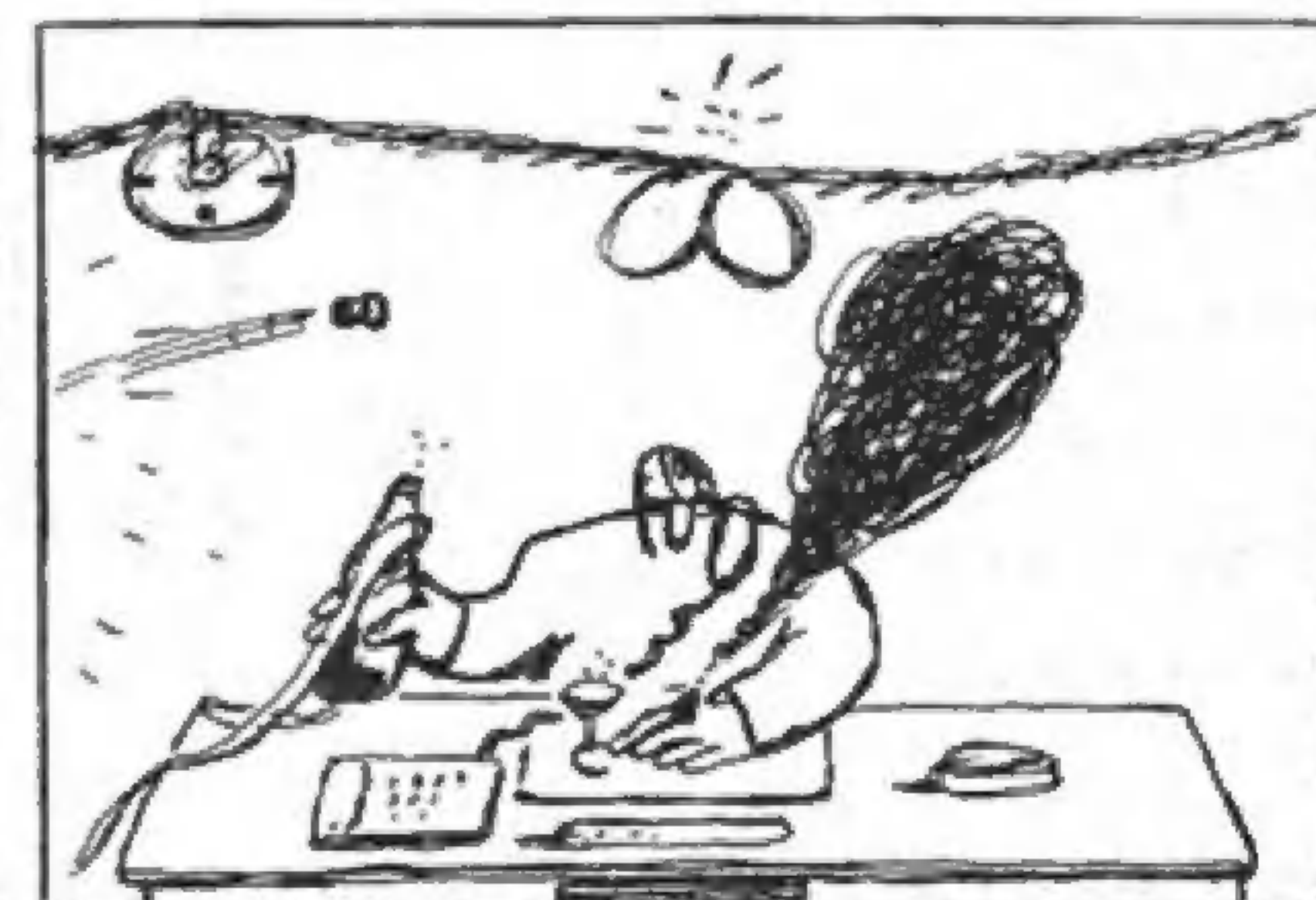
By appearing to place great faith in such research, the Home Secretary has done little to dampen the current panic about videos and has allowed attention to be diverted from more important matters. We may well want to find ways of protecting children from the more extreme screen images they may be exposed to, and we should certainly welcome rigorous research. But these prerogatives should not be allowed to deflect attention from what is really needed in the aftermath of the Bulger case – a reasoned and lengthy examination of the causes of crime and the best methods of preventing it.

## Young Film Journalist of the Year

The winner of the competition, run by *Sight and Sound* in association with *The Independent*, was Ryan Gilbey of North Weald, who impressed the judges by his ability to combine accurate description with a refreshing enthusiasm for the emotional effect of cinema technique. His review of *The Cement Garden* argued his case rather than merely stating it and found powerful verbal equivalents for visual pleasures. The judges also wish to commend Jeremy Clarke of Cleethorpes for a shrewd analysis of *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* and K. H. Shuaib of Sherborne for a review of *True Romance* that found something new to say about a well-trodden field.

## JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, the champagne's flowing, Mel's here, Barbara's expected & the Xmas tree looks so real you wanna save it. So stop dwelling on the appalling grosses of our 2 surefire holiday releases & get over here. We can consider your future with this studio in the New Year... just kidding Jerry!'



# The business

● The death of River Phoenix could well tell us more about the media than about Hollywood. US television, particularly the LA stations, treated the story as a major news item, playing and replaying the tape of brother Leaf's frantic 911 phone call interspersed with shots of the flower-strewn pavement outside Johnny Depp's Viper Room club.

CNN's *Showbiz Tonight* – a bargain-basement version of Paramount Television's top-rated *Entertainment Tonight* – gave the story a death-of-a-president style splash, relegating the passing of Federico Fellini (which occurred on the same North American news day) to an afterthought. Still, given the programme's name, I suppose that was reasonable enough.

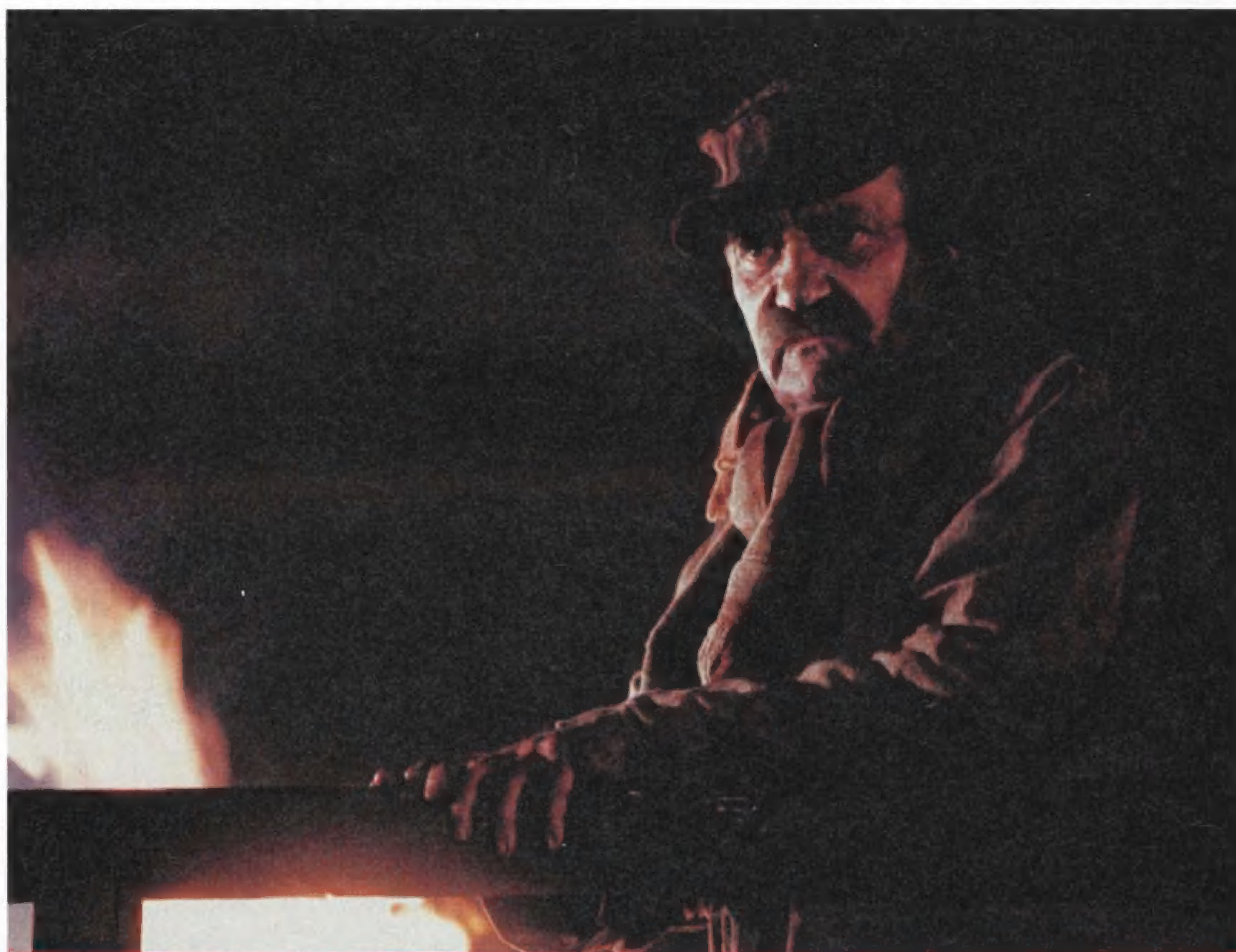
The British press, meanwhile, were quite discreet – though more out of ignorance, I suspect, than decorum, up to and including the bizarre piece by Joan Goodman in the 27 November *Guardian*, which managed the not inconsiderable feat of couching a *People* magazine approach – Hollywood is a hell hole: wanna hear a few details? – in the language of serious social comment.

In point of fact, though, the immediate impact of the actor's demise was felt more strongly by British producers than by Hollywood itself. At the time of his death, Phoenix was three to four weeks away from completing *Dark Blood*, a thriller being filmed on location in Utah by Dutch director George Sluizer. *Dark Blood* was produced by Joanne Sellar (*Hardware*, *Dust Devil*) and executive produced by Nik Powell under the new Scala Productions banner, which he uses now that Palace Pictures has gone. The film was backed by Fine Line Features, the art-film arm of New Line Cinema, and was a three-hander: Phoenix starred opposite Judy Davis and Jonathan Pryce.

From *Dark Blood*, the actor was scheduled to go more or less straight to New Orleans to play a major role (that of the interviewer) in Neil Jordan's *Interview with the Vampire*, produced by Powell's former Palace partner Steve Woolley. At the time of going to press, the role had not been re-cast. But since no footage



Phoenix rising



Trouble down pit: Claude Berri's 'Germinal'

of Phoenix had yet been shot, there is no likelihood of that film being cancelled.

Sluizer is less lucky. Having had his competent if minor Dutch-made thriller *The Vanishing* run through the Hollywood mill and come out as an unrecognisable melodrama starring Jeff Bridges, he has now had his second US film – made in much more sympathetic surroundings – definitively cancelled. There are even rumours that the insurance claim on the shut down may be affected by the causes of Phoenix's death (an overdose brought on by the taking of a heroin/cocaine speed-ball).

**N**o, Stanley Kubrick's next film won't be the European-based war movie, 'Wartime Lies', as announced here back in June – or not yet, anyway.

Instead, the 65-year-old director will be returning to sci-fi for the first time since '2001' with a film called 'A.I.' (short for 'artificial intelligence'), which is due to be shot some time next year. It tells the story of what happens after the greenhouse effect has drowned New York and cybernetics has given us robots as smart as we are.

Apparently Kubrick has been toying with the project for some time, but was not convinced that he could get the post-apocalyptic effects he wanted until he saw 'Jurassic Park'. So maybe some good will come of it after all.

● What happens when you get bought out by Ted Turner? Well, if you work in the production department of New Line Cinema (which Turner

acquired this summer), the answer is: you get fired.

Even though New Line has had its best year for some time and is already upgrading its image away from *Friday the 13th* towards things like the recently completed Whoopi Goldberg-Ray Liotta romantic comedy *Corrina, Corrina*, the three executives working just below production chief Michael De Luca got the boot at the beginning of November. The company, meanwhile, is confidently talking about budgets of up to \$18 million (\$4 million used to be the limit).

No word yet, though, about plans for Turner's other summer acquisition, Castle Rock, which has a much higher-quality profile (latest productions include *A Few Good Men* and *In the Line of Fire*), but nothing like New Line's survival record (the latter has been around since the 70s, whereas Castle Rock was formed at the end of the 80s).

**I** was once within earshot when the editor of a trade paper was set upon by an irate Wardour Street executive and verbally assaulted over a story the paper had run a couple of weeks previously.

The details of the dispute were difficult to follow, but the gist of the complaint was this: Yes, the story was true; No, you shouldn't have printed it, because the job of a trade paper is to support the industry. No news unless it's good news, in other words.

On recent form, there is no chance of the editor of 'Le Film français' undergoing that kind of verbal assault: his paper's priorities

are well and truly established, as demonstrated by the lengthy interview with producer/director Claude Berri which 'Le Film français' ran shortly before the opening of Berri's latest epic, 'Germinal'.

A few weeks previously, Alain Rocca – a successful producer of the younger generation whose Les Films Lazennec has been very successful with such apparently uncommercial fare as Eric Rochant's 'Un monde sans pitié' – stated in an interview in the film-school magazine 'Confrontations' that 'L'Amant' ('The Lover'), which Berri produced, "presaged the imminent death of cinema". A couple of weeks later, 'Le Nouvel Economiste' ran a completely unrelated story in which it claimed that 'Germinal' would need an audience of 10 million in France (not impossible: last year's 'Les Visiteurs' was seen by more than that) to make any money.

Berri – a man who normally shuns interviews – was not well pleased, and 'Le Film français' was given to understand that he would talk to it exclusively, provided questions relating to the Rocca and 'Nouvel Economiste' comments were asked. And so they were, enabling Berri to recall, in great detail and seemingly off the cuff, figures which proved 'Le Nouvel Economiste' decisively wrong. The figures looked a bit tendentious to me – but not to the 'Film français' interviewer, who also provided Berri with the opportunity to deliver an eloquent exhortation of Rocca.

'Germinal', meanwhile, played along nicely with the plan, proving a massive hit at the French box office, with admission figures rivalling those of 'Jurassic Park'.



● Speaking of which tedious exercise in gosh-heck excitement, S&S readers may be pleased to know that German porn queen Teresa Orlowski – whose company, VTO, has long been in the forefront of bad taste – recently released her Christmas special, *Jurassic Fuck: Attack of the Pornosaurs*. Reports that Orlowski's film had a more complex plot than Spielberg's could not be confirmed at press time.

**S**till on the subject of taste, you will be pleased to know that a TV company currently transmitting to your home is almost certain soon to be offering you a breathlessly dramatised account of the Menendez murder case – the one about the two rich kids who may or may not have been abused by their father and may or may not have murdered their parents.

Even more curiously, one of the mini-series will star Edward James Olmos in the role of Jose Menendez, the father (whose company,

Incidentally, put up some of the money for 'Reservoir Dogs'). The series marks the first time in living memory that Olmos has agreed to play a lead role of such an unsympathetic complexion.

● It was not much commented on outside the trade press, but Francis Bouygues died this summer. Who, you say? Francis Bouygues, the concrete king – the man who built a business empire on being in the right place at the right time.

The right place was the Pas de Calais in 1944. Over the previous few years, the Germans had needed a lot of concrete to build blockhouses. Then, all of a sudden, the Germans were gone and the new owners needed a lot of concrete to build roads. Bouygues had a lot of concrete. The concrete king became rich.

In his declining years, Bouygues decided to pour some of his fortune

into his lifelong love: the movies. So he set up a production company called CiBy 2000 (in French, that is pronounced quite like 'C. B. De Mille') and funded some quite interesting films, including Pedro Almodóvar's *Tacones lejanos* (*High Heels*), David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* and Jane Campion's *The Piano*.

A couple of years back, when Bouygues took sick, word was that the old man's film foible would die with him, since other CiBy executives were keen to pull the plug on what they saw as an irrelevant drain on the company's resources. How reassuring, then, to be able to report that in October, after several months of restructuring, CiBy 2000 announced an eight-film slate with an average budget of \$10 million.

This will include two films from Campion, starting with *My Guru and*

*His Disciple*, to be made after she has finished *The Portrait of a Lady* for PolyGram, and followed by one co-written with her sister, Anna, who is currently completing her debut feature *Bloody Weekend*. Other CiBy directors include Mike Leigh, Zhang Yimou, Wim Wenders, Maurice Pialat and Jean-Pierre Mocky.

Already in production are Bertolucci's *Little Buddha* (reportedly the apple of the late owner's eye), Charles Burnett's *The Glass Shield*, Almodóvar's recently completed *Kika* and Emir Kusturica's *Once Upon a Time There Was a World*, a "poetic statement about the war in Yugoslavia" which began filming in Prague in November.

If I wanted a legacy, I can't think of one I'd rather leave.

**A**m I alone in noticing that, these days, new information technology starts in the leisure industry, then, if it works, is developed for grown-up things like business and industry? CD-ROM, for example, has been built up as a computer games system, with industrial and business applications only now being developed.

Interesting to note, therefore, that one of the godfathers of the 70s special effects boom – Douglas Trumbull, who worked with Kubrick on '2001' and made his own quirky outer space saga 'Silent Running' in 1971 – has definitively abandoned the big screen for the electronic playground.

The major attraction at the new pyramid-shaped, \$375 million Luxor hotel in Las Vegas – which opened on 14 October – is a 'Trumbull Theater', where hotel guests can experience a \$4, 15-minute 'ride' through the past, the present and the future. Trumbull Theaters are already operating on a smaller scale in Reno, Nevada, and Sydney, Australia. And, for recent vacationers to Los Angeles, Universal Studios' 'Back to the Future' ride is also a Trumbull creation.

● Finally, that supposedly ideal piece of showbiz cross-fertilisation – the one between the music industry and the motion-picture business – has failed yet again. If all the acid-heads who bought a David Bowie album went to see movies in which Bowie starred, Nicolas Roeg and Nagisa Oshima would be rich men.

The latest casualty is former Eagle Glenn Frey, who was given the lead role in a new primetime network television series on the basis of a couple of *Miami Vice* guest spots. The series, *South of Sunset*, in which Frey played a maverick private eye, was cancelled after only one episode. The series premiere on CBS got a 6.1, the lowest primetime network rating ever. With viewing figures like that, it has to be a natural for Sky One.

Biggest loser, though, is likely to be the rock star's mum, who had been quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as saying that after all those years of watching her boy make the big time in jeans and T-shirts, "at last he's going to be able to wear his Armanis".

## EUROPEAN TV Licensing lore

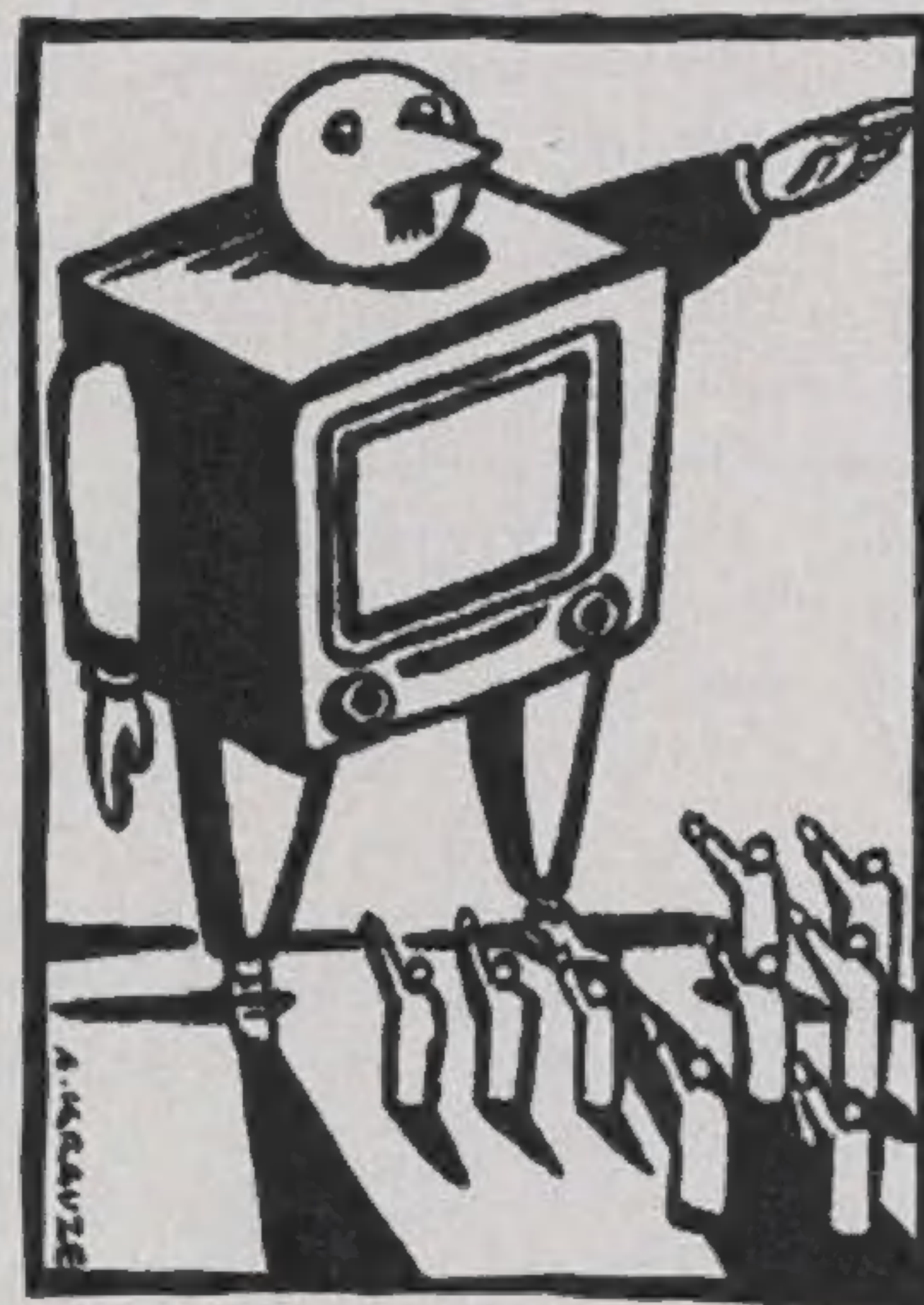
On 24 November, Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke announced the long-expected relaxation in ownership rules on regional ITV licenses. Now one company can own two large licences (unless they are both in London). The takeover race in ITV was on, and five days later Carlton unveiled a 'friendly' bid for Central which will result in one company controlling, among other things, licences covering 20 million viewers and some 30 per cent of ITV's revenue.

In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi has long had a considerably bigger slice of commercial television. He controls the three biggest Italian commercial television networks, with over 35 per cent of viewing. The same week that Peter Brooke revealed his new rules governing ownership, Berlusconi was announcing his support for Gianfranco Fini in the run-off election for mayor of Rome. Fini is leader of the main Italian fascist party, the MSI.

Not long ago Italy was much cited as a dire warning of what could happen to British television once regulation was lifted. Britain would follow the Italians down the "stripping housewives" road, ran one famous advertising campaign run by an ITV company against the Tories' 1988 Broadcasting White Paper.

This time no one suggested that events in Italy might contain any lessons for Britain. But unfortunately they do. Berlusconi's new political posturings bear on the British ITV takeover debate in three ways.

First, very directly. On 1 January the moratorium on hostile takeovers



of ITV comes to an end. So the ITV licensees won't just be gobbling up each other, they can also be gobbled up by European media moguls – one of whom is, of course, Silvio Berlusconi. Open support for fascists would seem to be fairly strong grounds for preventing someone from holding an ITV licence. Do the ITC and the Heritage Secretary agree? And if they do, have they any powers under the 1990 Broadcasting Act to stop him?

Second, one of the main arguments for relaxing the ownership rules on UK ITV has been that the existing ITV companies are too small to be players in the international market. Brooke's November announcement goes only part of the way to solving that – a combined Carlton/Central still won't be quite in the Berlusconi league.

So, not surprisingly, those who

advocate turning British television into a world player are already urging further lifting of the ownership curbs on ITV. The logic is impeccable. Berlusconi is the supreme example of a successful international operator with a near-monopoly domestic base. But what he also shows is that the conditions for international success can work against the interests of domestic viewers. Advocates of a global future for British television should ponder that lesson.

The third connection is the basic reason for curbs on the concentration of media ownership in the first place. Many critics of Brooke's relaxation have seen the problem as being the damage this could do to ITV's regional basis. There has always been a strong element of myth about ITV's regional soul, but the real regional element – the regional programme requirements – will probably continue to be enforced by the ITC through the coming wave of takeovers.

If this is the case, why maintain the ownership curbs? One traditional answer is that it is unwise to put too much media power in the hands of a single individual, because that individual may use it to do something politically very nasty.

As Berlusconi holds press conferences about building a right-wing bloc that includes the fascists – and cancels primetime films on his channels to ensure coverage – that traditional reason for curbing concentration of media ownership still seems very relevant.

Peter Goodwin



# FUTURE CHIC

JEAN MARIE LEROY



**Pedro Almodóvar's new film 'Kika' may have attracted the rage of Spanish critics, but it shows his talent for glossy perversity is as sharp as ever. By Paul Julian Smith**

● It promises to be a cold winter in Madrid. As the long hangover from the Olympic *annus mirabilis* of 1992 drags on, Spain is facing up to record unemployment, continuing political scandal, and mounting concern over the intrusions of the newly deregulated media. In a mirror image of the UK, a long-serving government, incapable of managing either the budget deficit or the rising tide of crime, is confronted by an ineffectual opposition and an alienated electorate. The only difference is that in Spain the government is socialist and the opposition back-to-basics conservatives.

In the week that Pedro Almodóvar's *Kika* was released, 17,000 people applied for 200 clerical jobs in Madrid city council. They sat competitive examinations in the former municipal abattoir. When Almodóvar shot a bizarre fashion show in the same location for *Matador* (1986), it was a campy joke; but as unemployment heads for a ten-year high, no one is laughing. Ever sensitive to the mood of the moment, Almodóvar's latest feature offers evidence of a new pessimism clouding a famously sunny outlook; the erstwhile muse of Madrid now proclaims the city to be "unliveable", swamped by drug-related crime.

The winter would also seem to mark a new low for the once promising Spanish film industry. Now the high hopes inspired by the generous state subsidies of the 80s have gone unfulfilled, policy has shifted to protectionism. The government has passed panic measures to reduce the dubbing licenses granted to US-hungry distributors, and is vigorously campaigning for film and television to be excluded from the GATT agreement.

At this inauspicious moment comes *Kika*, the longest-awaited and biggest-budget film of the year and the tenth feature from Almodóvar, the most profitable Spanish director in both domestic and foreign markets. Three questions arise. First, how will Almodóvar adjust to the end of the wonder years of the 80s, the decade of conspicuous pleasures and quick profits with which he is so closely identified? Second, what is his relationship to a Spanish film industry whose perpetual crisis now ►

**Naive, sexy and vigorously independent, Verónica Forqué, left, is an incorrigibly optimistic heroine; Victoria Abril, opposite, is Andrea, video vamp extraordinaire**







◀ seems in danger of becoming terminal? And finally, why has his undisputed commercial success attracted such critical derision, both abroad, where he is often dismissed as “crazy” or “camp”, and at home, where the attacks are more personal, and increasingly bitter? The answers are not what we might expect; and they derive ultimately from a suspicion of identity politics which is typically Spanish and somewhat mystifying to foreigners.

## Rubber and real life

*Kika* still offers fans the frantic farce and gloriously saturated colours and costumes we have come to expect from its director, and in the title character we find the incorrigible optimist typical of Almodóvar's heroines. As played by Verónica Forqué (previously cast as the perky prostitute in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, 1984), Kika confronts the vicissitudes of urban rape and multiple murder with disturbing equanimity. By turns naive, sexy and vigorously independent, Forqué, known to Spanish audiences for her appearance in domestic farces with titles like *Salsa Rosa* (*Pink Sauce*, Manuel Gómez Pereira, 1991), suggests a curious combination of Judy Holliday and Barbara Windsor.

The benevolent Kika is matched by Victoria Abril's malevolent Andrea Caracortada (Cut-face), the presenter of an exploitative real-life crime show entitled *The Worst of the Day*. This is sponsored, with conspicuous incongruity, by a milk manufacturer. Abril clearly relishes the role, sporting much-publicised black rubber outfits by Gaultier and revealing what must be the bushiest female armpits ever shown on screen. In the central scene of the film, Kika is raped by an escaped convict who has grown tired of screwing “queers” (*maricones*) in prison. The crime is presented as a comic *tour de force*; certainly it provoked much hilarity from the young, mainly female audience on the night I saw the film in the massive Palace of Music theatre in Madrid. However, Kika's humiliation comes not so much from the act itself (which she vigorously resists), as from its television screening by the wicked dominatrix Andrea, who has procured graphic video footage from a mysterious voyeur.

While such sequences will surely try the patience of UK audiences, they hint at a new social concern in Almodóvar – albeit one that is typically ironised and distanced. Once again, in the very week of *Kika*'s release, a Spanish family who were victims of a kidnapping complained of the “disgusting” exploitation of their case by a private television channel. And the newly hostile press coverage of Almodóvar himself has revealed hitherto unplumbed depths of that combination of unhealthy curiosity and ghoulish delight known in Spanish as *morbo*. Thus the film prompted reports of Almodóvar's supposed marriage to long-time collaborator Bibi Andersen, now celebrated as a chat-show hostess and once billed as the tallest transsexual in Europe. Denying he was the source of the wedding rumours, Almodóvar compared the press coverage he has nurtured so carefully throughout his career to a “bomb”, liable to explode in his face at the worst possible moment. *Morbo* is, however, a two-way street.



**Dames and divas:**  
Almodóvar's long-time collaborator, transsexual Bibi Andersen, with Peter Coyote, top; Victoria Abril models Gaultier's new line in high-tech, above; opposite, Kika (Verónica Forqué) is raped while her maid (Rossy de Palma) looks on

And by including gleefully gratuitous frontal nude shots of Andersen in *Kika*, Almodóvar himself might not be seen to be upholding the highest standards of cinematic propriety.

The typically stylish credit sequence of *Kika* features a spotlight, a keyhole, and a camera shutter. This can be read socially as a reference to the increasingly intrusive voyeurism of the Spanish media; it also points quite clearly to that reflexive and ironic attention to the cinematic apparatus that has run through Almodóvar's work since his first feature *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980) had its three eponymous heroines make a video version of their lives. An unlikely Spanish Godard, Almodóvar uses *Kika* to rub our faces in the self-conscious (hi)stories of cinema held to be typical of a post-modern culture. Indeed, all *Kika*'s characters are shown to fictionalise their experience: Kika herself is a make-up artist, shown at one point adding ‘natural colour’ to a corpse; Andrea circles Madrid with a camera on her futuristic helmet and arc lights in place of breasts; the two





male leads, Kika's boyfriend Ramón (Alex Casanovas, in the Antonio Banderas role of the attractive and sensitive young man) and his stepfather Nicholas (Peter Coyote, dubbed unconvincingly into Spanish) play a voyeuristic photographer and an autobiographical novelist respectively. Most gratuitously and intrusively, Almodóvar casts his own octogenarian mother as a television presenter and has her drop knowing references to her son's profession. The viewer can only agree with her when she tells Nicholas, an expatriate American, "Nothing compares to Spain."

### Cruel but cool

The commercial background of *Kika* is, however, perhaps more important than these emphatically self-conscious elements. The second co-production between Almodóvar's own company El Deseo, S.A. (Desire Ltd) and mainstream French producer CiBy 2000, *Kika*'s generous budget enables glossy production values which few films outside Hollywood could

aspire to. If European cinema is in Stuart Hall's words "on the verge of a nervous breakdown", the continuing success of the Almodóvar trademark, most spectacularly in France, might provide a model elsewhere for a film practice which is both grounded in domestic concerns and attractive to foreign audiences. In the Spanish capital, where *Kika* is currently the most conspicuous local film playing the vast picture palaces of the Gran Vía (Madrid's Shaftesbury Avenue) and the only domestic product to figure in the top ten grosses (bringing in a healthy \$300,000 in the first three weeks), El Deseo's dominance is such that it is claimed that industry insiders are unwilling even to criticise King Pedro the Cruel.

It seems likely, however, that Almodóvar has been a victim of his own success. Foreign audiences now expect stylish eroticism and furious farce from Spanish films, and they now have other directors such as Bigas Luna (*Jamón, jamón*) to provide it for them. In Spain itself, the newly cautious mood has made Fernando

Trueba's bland period comedy *Belle Époque* (soon to open in London) the most critically and commercially popular film of the year preceding *Kika*'s release. And an ill-timed announcement has just awarded the earnestly highbrow Víctor Erice (*The Spirit of the Beehive; The Quince Tree Sun*) the National Prize for Cinematography. *Kika*'s gorgeous art design and consistently inventive cinematography (by Alfredo Mayo, an Almodóvar regular) produce pleasure, but no longer surprise. It seems only fair to ask: has Almodóvar painted himself into a corner?

Almodóvar once claimed, facetiously, that he could not wait to go out of fashion so that he could become a classic. It would seem that only the first part of his wish has been granted. *Kika* was greeted in Spain by a crescendo of critical abuse, in which Almodóvar served as an unwilling and perhaps unwitting litmus test for the problems of misogyny and homophobia which continue to dog Spain more than a decade after the socially progressive Socialists took power. The responses relate both to the film itself ►



# A CHEERFUL RECESSION

Benedict Carver reports on the global fortunes of the new Spanish cinema

After its hysterical bout of expansion during the 80s, the Spanish economy is flagging. Madrid is unmistakably a city in recession, albeit a cheerful, Spanish sort of recession.

But the Spanish film industry soldiers on regardless. At the Madrid opening of *The Piano* this weekend the mood was bright – optimistic even. Spain has brushed up its image: it is no longer the preferred location for cheap Italian Westerns or bland comedies. Now Spanish films range from the preposterous crudity of Alex de la Iglesia's *Acción mutante* to the negative comedy of *Vacas*, the first feature by the talented Julio Medem. Spanish cinema possesses its own *enfant terrible* directors (Pedro Almodóvar, Juanma Bajo Ulloa), its own entrepreneurial producers (Andrés Vicente Gómez and Enrique Posner) and a clutch of exportable stars (Antonio Banderas, Carmen Maura, Victoria Abril).

Industry gossip in Madrid reveals inflationary salaries and large-budget (by European standards) productions. Both Banderas and Abril reportedly command in excess of \$300,000 per film. Meanwhile, English-language European co-productions, such as *The Flemish Board*, are being shot in Spain. This film is produced on an \$8 million budget by Enrique Posner – who brewed coffee for Tom Hanks on the set of Garry Marshall's *Nothing in Common* – with an American director (Jim McBride of *The Big Easy*) and English-language stars

(Art Malik and Kate Beckinsale). Spanish film was not always so cosmopolitan. November 20 marked the anniversary of the death of Franco with a gathering of 5,000 *franquistas* in the Plaza del Oriente and attacks by skinheads on prostitutes, beggars and foreigners. It was a reminder of darker times. In 1940 the Franco regime passed a law deeming that all foreign films exhibited in Spanish cinemas had to be dubbed rather than subtitled, with the result that Spanish cinema-goers quickly became unaccustomed to the sound of other languages. Fernando Trueba, director of *Belle Époque*, argues that the "guilt" of *franquismo* led to Spain's isolation and the parochial nature of Spanish films of the 50s and 60s. Film directors fell in line or, like Luis Buñuel, went into exile.

Spanish cinema was in the grip of a *teatro de evasión*, derived from the theatre, in which writers glossed over the harshness of contemporary Spain, producing light entertainment rather than serious drama. Victor Erice's celebrated *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) portrayed the frustration and rural isolation that resulted from the Civil War. Carlos Saura's *Cousin Angélica* (1974) was a watershed in its debunking of the Francoist myth



Fernando Trueba's 'Belle Époque'

and was the first film to be truly 'Republican'. "Only a few directors managed to break through," confirms Trueba.

The success of the Almodóvar *oeuvre* overseas, beginning with *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984), inspired Spanish production companies such as Vicente Gómez's Iberoamericana to exploit the global appetite for the director's meditations on sex, death and pastels. State support for the Spanish film industry is still significant, but it is free enterprise that is driving production: Iberoamericana's sales on films including *Jamón, jamón* and *Huevos de oro* (Golden Balls) amounts to around \$3 million. Film-makers are now working in Spain to produce their own distinctive brand of cinema. Spanish films are known for their frank sexuality – Vicente Aranda's *Amantes* (Lovers) – their digs at *machismo* (Bigas Luna's *Huevos de oro*), and their pure inventiveness, as with Julio Medem's latest, *La ardilla roja* (The Red Squirrel).

But it is Trueba's *Belle Époque* that typifies the creative Spanish attitude. Trueba's film, a colourful comedy of how an army deserter (Jorge Sanz) seduces, one after the other, the daughters of a painter (Fernando Fernán Gómez) during the Civil War, incorporates the old and the new Spain. It is a European co-production, shot in Portugal, with a French title and Spanish stars, and it is eminently marketable. "Belle Époque should be able to break into that mainstream audience which every foreign film strives for," says Tom Bernard, co-chairman of Sony Pictures Classics in the US.

*Belle Époque* is the second-highest grossing Spanish-language film ever at the Spanish box office. In marketing terms, recommendations don't come much higher than that.

◀ and to Almodóvar's typically idiosyncratic promotion of it. Based, as ever, on a cavalcade of strong women (from 'good' *Kika* to 'bad' Andrea by way of Rossy de Palma's gloriously 'ugly' turn as a lesbian maid in love with her mistress), *Kika* shamelessly proclaims itself a woman's film and one whose female characters are granted both the 'ultra-feminine' visual pleasure characteristic of mainstream film and the central narrative position generally occupied by men. This implicit threat to masculinity is confirmed by the male leads who, as so often in Almodóvar, are comparatively dull: the cataleptic Casanovas is muted; the saturnine Coyote merely bemused.

## Identity parades

Moreover, as a consummate female impersonator, Almodóvar has clearly placed himself on that side of the cinematic gender division which is coded as feminine. Thus he posed cheekily for Spain's best-selling daily *El País* peeking out from behind a pair of curtains, an

oversized polka-dotted bow in his bushy hair. The same paper carried pictures of the director in costume for all the principal roles of the film, male and female. Even *Cahiers du cinéma* ran a spread of parallel shots of director and actors acting out scenes on the set, with Almodóvar vigorously ironing the laundry or firmly bound to a chair like Rossy de Palma's maid during the rape sequence. Such antics seem to have provoked the latent homophobia of the Spanish press, usually liberal by UK standards. Indeed one paper accused Almodóvar of promoting "a homosexual fashion", an accusation he proved over-eager to refute.

At a deeper level, the threat of Almodóvar's performances is in their hints of subjective merger and fluidity. Just as his films are full of characters unable to separate from their parents or lovers (in this case the mother-obsessed Ramón), so Almodóvar's over-identification with his creations, his compulsion to repeat and act out their dilemmas both on and off the set, put fixed individual boundaries into crisis

and throw the rigid divisions of gender binaries into confusion. Wilfully frivolous and superficial, Almodóvar's films can be read as identity parades, an acting-out of roles with no depth or essence. This cult of the surface is nowhere more evident than in *Kika*. Gloriously shot, beautifully dressed and skilfully acted, it is poorly plotted and characterised, its rogues' gallery of grotesques provoking little of the audience identification that Almodóvar was clearly hoping for.

## Flashy fun

But if *Kika* may well be seen as a mid-point in Almodóvar's career, in which the maestro treads water between the unselfconscious pleasures of the 80s and the more critical climate of the 90s, there can be no doubt as to the importance of that career as a whole. For as Almodóvar's films clearly reveal, far from being belated, the Spain that offers a mocking reflection of the UK's political and economic decline reveals no sign of the regressions signalled by Major's cynical appeal to "traditional values", or indeed Clinton's disingenuous call for "security". In spite of domestic horror stories, still less do we find in Spain the turn to neo-fascism exemplified by Italy. Indeed, Madrid may well be ahead of London or New York in the sexual arena.

In his love of sex and gender fluidity, his hostility to fixed positions of all kinds, Almodóvar anticipated by a full decade the critique of identity politics now commonplace in Anglo-American feminist and queer theory. Once we are weaned from the reassuring comforts of the dichotomies of gay/straight, female/male, his cinema offers us English-speakers the promise of a nightmare and a dream for the 90s. The nightmare is a future of powerlessness in which (as in Spain) feminists and gays prove unable to organise and unwilling to found a sense of community on the experiences they have in common. The dream is a future of fluidity in which (as in Spain, perhaps, once more) sexual practices are not constrained by fixed allegiances and each of us negotiates our own price in the libidinal economy. The financial metaphor is apt. For as Almodóvar's constant concern for the bottom line has shown, economic clout is essential if any dissonant voice wishes to make itself heard in an increasingly globalised entertainment industry.

*Kika* ends with its plucky heroine, having sped in her car from the scene of multiple murders, picking up a handsome young stranger at random from the side of the road. The scene is shot against a glorious blaze of sunflowers. Relentlessly optimistic even in extremis, Almodóvar may also, like his heroine in this sequence, have lost his sense of direction for the time being. It seems very likely, however, that the future journey will be well worth making, the cinematic and sexual adventure characteristically unpredictable. In the meantime, *Kika* remains gloriously flashy fun and Almodóvar's combination of uncompromising modernity and unabashed visual pleasure could teach the more timid and tasteful UK film industry a thing or two.

'Kika' will be released in the UK in 1994





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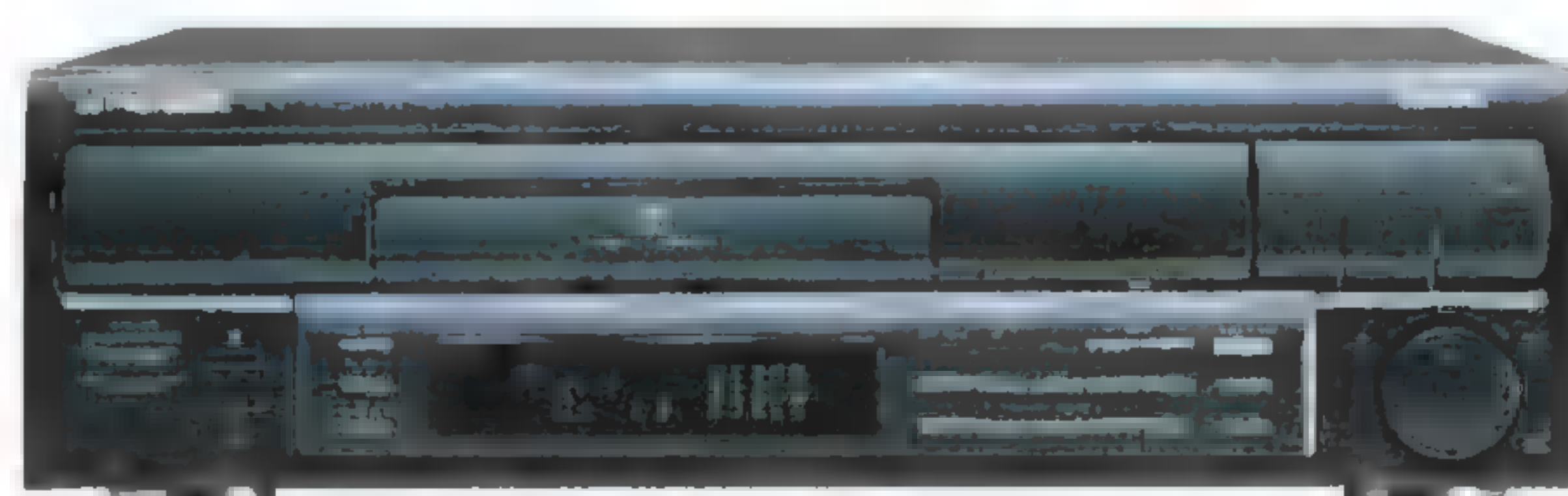
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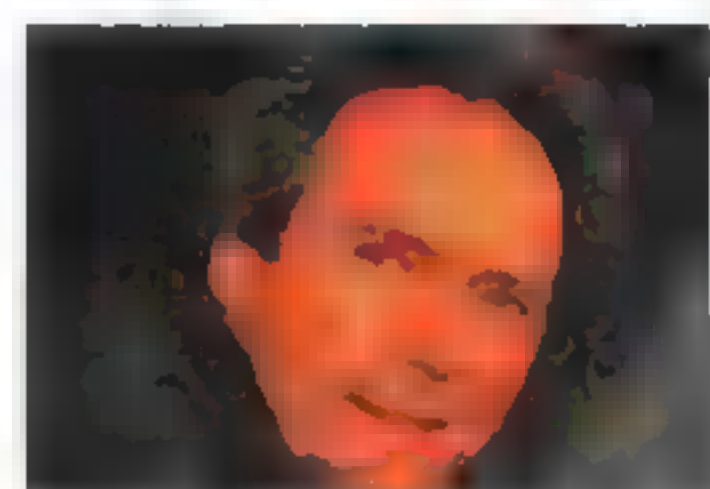
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● There's a midsummer sunset in Johannesburg and the small cluster of glass and concrete high-rises that erupts to the right of the city's centre looks as if it is on fire. Up on the rooftops neon signs begin to flicker into life, advertising Total Oil and international hotel chains. The wide highway that snakes past the solid grey Civic Building is swarming with Mercedes and BMWs. Squinting in the warm evening light, one could briefly mistake the place for LA.

The illusion is bolstered by the fact that there is no one on the streets but a film crew and its entourage. Johannesburg-born director Elaine Proctor is getting great pleasure from filming in her home city. "It's an extraordinary place, a huge first world/third world sprawl with all its vagaries visible. In that sense, it's a phenomenal place to make a film. It's much more surprising than anything you could create in Harare."

The film in question is *Friends*, the story of a relationship between three disparate women in the divided country. A couple of years ago Proctor might well have had to use a city outside South Africa to stand in for Johannesburg. In 1989 she shot her first and only other feature, the rural *On the Wire*, in the hinterlands of Zimbabwe. In this new post-apartheid era, however, film-makers no longer have to submit scripts to the government for scrutiny. But while the relaxation of censorship paves a way forward, other things are not so swift to change.

There may be a new cultural freedom in South Africa, but financial constraints abound. The money for *Friends* still had to be raised outside the country, with the £1.5 million budget coming from Britain's Channel 4 and British Screen, and the French companies Chrysalide and RSA. This is despite the fact that the South African film industry, bolstered by tax shelters, has always been profitable to the point of profligacy. But the staple fare of such rich enterprises as Nu Metro (which notoriously hooked up with Cannon Films in the mid-80s) and Toron studios is cheaply produced and quickly shot action movies in which the South African landscape variously stands in for California, Miami, Cuba – anywhere but here.

*Friends* hardly fitted with Toron's style. Though British producer Judy Hunt found she could get meetings with the appropriate executives, "They said they were interested in the subject matter, but I don't think they were. Their get-out clause was to suggest that they took the whole project over, chucked out the people Elaine wanted and put their people in

instead." It's the kind of response Proctor and Hunt had expected.

There's a lot about South Africa that's predictable. For the outsider, it starts on the approach to Johannesburg's Jan Smuts airport. The landscape below reveals all. The parched and dusty sprawl of the townships with their shed-like houses makes way for the green expanses of the city's suburbs, speckled with the topaz pools that are, like the guard dogs, *de rigueur* accessories for every white upper-middle-class household. In the fleeting moments before landing, all one's worst expectations about the state are horribly confirmed.

On location for *Friends*, the truth of the stereotype was borne out the night the assistant director needed some alsatians as extras in a scene involving the security police. A call was put out in the neighbourhood for guard dogs and their owners, and within half an hour a batch of appropriately ferocious hounds had been rounded up. It doesn't surprise. A place like South Africa is supposed to make a speciality of guard dogs. It's one of the clichés about the country.

#### Mapping new terrain

To the visiting outsider, South Africa is framed by such truths, whether culled from newsroom bulletins or protest documentaries. International cinema audiences are likely to have built up their picture of the country from the spate of rousing anti-apartheid films made in the late 80s, starting with English director Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* which, along with Chris Menges and writer Shawn Slovo's *A World Apart* and Euzhan Palcy's adaptation of the André Brink novel *A Dry White Season*, recreated Johannesburg in Harare. (It's a line that continues with *Bopha!*, American actor-turned-director Morgan Freeman's adaptation of Percy Mtwa's play about a black South African cop.) It was not until South African director Oliver Schmitz and writer Thomas Mogotlane's ground-breaking *Mapantsula*, shot covertly in the city in 1987 (the script submitted to the authorities glossed over the story's political content), that audiences were offered an authentic peep into the country.

South African film-makers like Proctor, who are attempting to create a post-apartheid cinema, know that they have to move on from such consciousness-raising films. But with only *Mapantsula* and more recently the film adaptation of the musical play *Sarafina!* in international distribution to account for the South African perspective, there is still much old

ground to excavate. Perhaps that is why for her first feature made on home territory, Proctor has elected to tell a story of three friends that provides a beginner's guide to her troubled country. Sophie (Kerry Fox), a public school-educated white girl who joins an ANC-affiliated MK (Spear of the Nation) cell and ends up planting a bomb at Jan Smuts airport, Aninka (Michele Burgers), a mild-mannered Afrikaner who buries her head in her archaeological studies, and Thoko (Dambisa Kente), a black school-teacher who gives her township students Yeats to read, are the archetypal characters. It is the film's given that they met and bonded at university in the early 80s and subsequently shared a house in the bohemian district of Troyeville, one of the first areas where black and white could mix. Like all good guides, *Friends* maps out the Johannesburg terrain, from the swimming pools of the northern suburbs to the dusty Wattsville township east of the city, sweeping across the last decade of history until the release of Nelson Mandela.

Indeed, *Friends* might seem burdened by too much history, too much geography. It is something Proctor is prepared to concede once the film is completed. "I wanted to look at somebody who had made the serious choice to become a guerrilla. But I found that I couldn't just make a film about a white middle-class girl. I needed to balance it with the experiences of other women from other cultures. It was apparent that one of them had to be African, and because of my own history, one of them had to be Afrikaans [Proctor's mother is an Afrikaner]. I suppose there are some very obvious premises, such as the fact that the characters all come from different language groups. But the problem was that I couldn't reduce it to just one of the storylines."

Proctor is only too aware of the constraints of the small cinematic legacy she has inherited. "I needed to use some of the vocabulary that had been established in films about South Africa, and then look deeper than that. Hopefully you get to a new truth via some oblique references to the clichés." Today's South African film-makers find themselves in a paradoxical situation, since despite those clichés, which are knitted into the fabric of the place, they cannot presume anything from their audiences. "I found myself without any givens. I couldn't even assume that people knew the difference between an English upper-middle-class family and an Afrikaner one."

In a film funded by British and French money (which dictated the casting of interna-

# SISTERS IN ARMS

Elaine Proctor's *'Friends'*, a story of three South African women and a beginner's guide to the country's problems, is part of a new post-apartheid cinema. Lizzie Francke spoke to the director on location





Ties that bind: Michele Burgers, Kerry Fox and Dambisa Kente represent three faces of South Africa in 'Friends'

tionally known Kerry Fox, an Australian, in the lead role), the trap seems to be that the presumed needs of an international audience, which has to be informed of such nuances, dominate. Proctor acknowledges this, but stresses that it was important for her, too, that *Friends* should work equally well at home and away. "I wanted to break down the boundaries of the version of what's going on here that you get in the news broadcasts." She emphasises that if the film seems to resemble too closely the other internationally funded films about South Africa, it is she, not the financiers, who takes responsibility. "The funders are ready to go for a film that falls outside that anti-apartheid frame of reference."

Compare *Friends* with *On the Wire*, made on a small budget while she was still a student at the National Film and Television School in Britain, and it seems that Proctor has taken an anxious step back into that frame. Signalling the arrival of a bold film-making talent (it won a BFI award for best first feature but was never distributed), *On the Wire* was a stark, almost Bergmanesque tale of the break-up of an Afrikaner soldier's marriage, which cut through to the emotional consequences of apartheid in a devastating fashion without having to chant "Amandla" once. Proctor, who like most progressive South African film-makers has a background in political documentary, preceded in her case by a stint at the celebrated Market Theatre of Johannesburg, decided to turn to fiction to create for herself a more personal and complete vision of South African life. "In *On the Wire* I wanted to examine the way an oppressive regime manifests itself in the most

private, and least social, of environments – and that was the bedroom."

With *Friends*, too, she planned to concentrate on the personal, the small gestures that make up South African life – so much so that during shooting the unit publicist spends her time stressing to the press, particularly the local press, that despite Sophie's MK activities, the film is about friendship, not politics. Later it appears that this is a ploy devised by Hunt. "I realised that people in the cast and crew didn't want politics thrust in their faces all the time. I wanted to protect the film, get it in the can and then start talking politics," she claims.

#### Overburdened with reality

Those involved know only too well that the personal is always the political. Thami Sibisi, one of the few black members of the crew, has been employed as a 'trainee' under a scheme initiated by the Film and Allied Workers' Organisation. In many ways his film-making background is similar to Proctor's – he has been involved in making documentaries in the townships for over ten years, one of which recently won a prize at the Johannesburg Weekly Mail Film Festival. He too would like to have access to fiction film-making, as he explains when allowed to take some time out from his menial tasks. "It is not easy, though, to get that training. We are saddled with an industry that perceives film-making to be a white privilege." Gesturing to some of the burly white South African crew members, he indicates that this attitude has been a problem on the set. Indeed, the country's divisions are starkly revealed at meal times, where black and white

personnel mostly elect to sit at separate tables. "I've come here to learn, not just to be a labourer. It still perplexes some people that I might want to make films myself."

Sibisi is, however, emphatic about his support for Proctor and what she is doing. "I cannot see myself becoming involved in making films that are not representative of the experience here at the moment. Elaine's film belongs to us. I want to safeguard it." The privileged white South African film-maker and the lowly paid black technician whose status belies his potential – it's another cliché and no doubt one that weighs heavily on Proctor as she attempts to represent everyone and everything. The confusion of *Friends* is the confusion of a country with a lot of repair work to do. The clichés are the reality. Proctor cites the novelist J. M. Coetzee. "When he went to accept the peace prize in Jerusalem, he described the position of writers in South Africa as being burdened by too much reality. When the reality is so complete, so vigorous and challenging, there is very little space left for the imagination. I think that's true for a huge amount of writers and film-makers."

Months after the excitement of being able to make a film at home is over, Proctor seems weary. At the Weekly Mail Film Festival screening of *Friends* in Johannesburg, reactions are mixed. The *Weekly Mail's* critic Mark Gevisser lashes out at the film, calling it "messy" in both style and politics and criticising Proctor for "trying on a whole range of outfits from the wardrobe of South African possibility." But despite his reservations, he states that ultimately it "deserves to be taken seriously." A WASP from the suburbs spits at Proctor's feet, while her old nanny praises the film's evocation of a black mother-daughter relationship – something South Africans rarely see on screen.

Proctor comments that the situation in her country is tougher than she has ever known; with bloody political reality looming large, it is hard to take heart at the reactions to *Friends*. Again the news bulletin wins out over anything more imaginative. Proctor explains that it is difficult to feel creative here. "Maybe that's why my next film is going to be in Namibia. I don't believe that I have enough oxygen in this environment. South Africa has got an almost obsessive self-referentiality. Going on my research trip to Namibia was wonderful because you understand that there are other places out there that are struggling and fascinating and matter as much. And that's a liberation."

*'Friends' opens on 14 January and is reviewed on page 44 of this issue*



With everyone from psychos to scholars hitting the highway, has the road movie found new wheels? By Michael Atkinson

# CROSSING THE FRONTIERS

● A breath away from the millennium and here we are on the road again, in a flamboyantly tinted early Caddy or T-Bird with a gas tank full of broken dreams and a warm gun on the seat beside us. Perhaps we're heading somewhere or maybe we're leaving somewhere far behind, but either way we're lost in the middle. The crush of recent road movies is rivalled in density only by the post-Second World War noirs and late-60s, early-70s counter-culture hot rods, the most famous of which, *Easy Rider*, will see its silver anniversary this year. Of course, as Albert Brooks made clear in his *Easy Rider* riff *Lost in America* (1985), in which a frustrated 80s yuppie couple imitate their favourite movie – disastrously – by taking to the freeways in a mobile home, everything but the landscape has changed.

It's the Last Chance Gas Station on the movie map, reeking of the desperation and hope and

restlessness that seem to come over our collective culture every quarter of a century or so. If the signs are worth reading, we're cleaving into a new psychosocial gridlock in which questions of mass identity and national meaning become too big for traditional answers. Speeding towards the outskirts, preferably in a convertible, seems the wisest recourse.

Indeed, the petrol already expended since the late 80s could fuel the clover leaves of America for an entire summer month: *Candy Mountain*, *Down By Law*, *Sherman's March*, *Raising Arizona*, *Near Dark*, *Midnight Run*, *Made in USA*, *Promised Land*, *Rain Man*, *Patti Rocks*, *Miles from Home*, *Miracle Mile*, *Drugstore Cowboy*, *Landscape in the Mist*, *Powwow Highway*, *Pink Cadillac*, *Homer & Eddie*, *Coupe de Ville*, *Alligator Eyes*, *Cold Feet*, *Wild at Heart*, *Thelma & Louise*, *Leaving Normal*, *Terminator 2*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *Until the End of the World*, *The Sheltering Sky*, *Delusion*, *Night on Earth*, *Roadside Prophets*, *Highway 61*, *Motorama*, *Breaking the Rules*, *Guncrazy*, *The Living End*, *One False Move*, *Falling Down*, *Trouble Bound*, *True Romance*, *Dust Devil*, *Poetic Justice*, *Josh and S.A.M.*, *Over the Hill*, *Road Scholar*, *Kalifornia*, *Calendar Girl*, *Highway Patrolman*, *A Perfect World*, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, *Natural Born Killers*, the new, star-crossed remake of *The Getaway*, and so on. That this list is split down the middle between indie idiosyncrasy and Hollywood formula-mongering merely attests to the genre's flexibility. No matter how many medium-cool recyclings of *Badlands* the studios grind out, movie heads like Gus Van Sant, Jim Jarmusch, Ross McElwee and Greg Araki have still managed to find new reasons to strike out for the frontier.

Of course, the recent deluge is a product of a generation raised on television and the open-ended, road-like format of the weekly serial. Two time-honoured examples, *The Fugitive* and *Route 66*, have both been recycled as cash cows (summer blockbuster and short-lived television retro-series, respectively), even though the Harrison Ford film, for all its box-office success, couldn't approximate the three-year night of the David Janssen show. While too few programmes capitalised on television's potential for perpetuity, the medium's use of narrative space – for instance, the weekly scenery changes and transitional architecture of series such as *Wagon Train*, *Star Trek*, *Have Gun – Will Travel*, *Movin' On*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *CHiPS* and *B.J. and the Bear* – has helped to redefine our

visual culture's subconscious predication on neatly concluded plotlines.

At the same time, just as Spielberg (*Duel*), Coppola (*The Rain People*), Scorsese (*Boxcar Bertha*), Hellman (*Two-Lane Blacktop*) and Bogdanovich (*Paper Moon*) test-drove the genre's highways at least once, the second generation of post-baby boom movie brats has fallen for the American auto allure and nihilistic cool of the road movie in a big way, having been raised on Terence Malick, Dennis Hopper and Francis Coppola rather than on Godard, Powell and Nicholas Ray. Virtually no self-respecting film school tyro can resist the still-resonant topography of vanishing points, billboards and motels, the extra-societal wilderness where the snug compression of urban culture peters out into a long empty stretch of entropic disorder.

Still, why make a 90s road movie if not to transgress the genre's timeworn iconography? Girlfriends, gays (*The Living End*), blacks (*Poetic Justice*), Native Americans (*Powwow Highway*), old ladies (*Over the Hill*), children, the handicapped (*Rain Man*, *Homer & Eddie*), vampires (*Near Dark*), pets – lately, everybody is packing into the nearest stolen roadster, slapping an Elvis tape into the stereo and leaving their ruined lives behind. If they're not explicitly in search of Hopper's American Dream, their tail-chasings seek a freedom the frontier – cinematic and otherwise – hasn't afforded since the Gold Rush (or, perhaps, *The Gold Rush*). Which makes the genre's exploding demographics seem more like poignant truth than a mere hyperextended formula. It's more than identity politics infiltrating a convenient and hip film tradition. In the road movie we have an ideogram of human desire and the last-ditch search for self, and who is more plagued by hunger and loss than the socially disenfranchised?

Though not by any means the road movie's first genre-throttle, it was the defiant sisterhood of *Thelma & Louise* that established the frontier of modern nomadism as the domain of conflicting social forces. Ridley Scott's film imbued many of the form's outcast clichés with an unheralded radical chic, including the final seppuku over the Grand Canyon, which took Barry Newman's driving into a road block in the final moments of *Vanishing Point* (1971) and powerfully politicised it. Suddenly road trips weren't just the avenues of fate or tragedy or criminal whim; now, every tribe, fringe ►



Along for the ride: Cathy O'Donnell and Farley Granger in 'They Live by Night', top; Peggy Cummins and John Dall in 'Gun Crazy', above; Brad Pitt, a psycho redneck in 'Kalifornia', opposite







**Back roads of noir:** Ann Savage and Tom Neal find shallow graves and fatal luck in Edgar G. Ulmer's B-movie classic *'Detour'*, below



**'Easy Rider':** Hopper and Fonda hog the highway in the archetypal 60s saga of road rebellion, above

**Man in the rear view mirror:** Dennis Weaver is the lone driver beset by paranoid perils in Spielberg's *'Duel'*, below



**Going nowhere fast:** Barry Newman takes a death trip in the 1971 movie *'Vanishing Point'*, above

◀ ideology and hue could gas up for an escapist rip, flouting the law and flying their flags of discontent and exclusion. Thus, the very notion of the outlaw is redefined (the road movie being the modern anti-hero's original stomping ground). Fonda and Hopper, both young white men with gas tanks full of cash and a mind-expanding world of time on their hands, don't seem to have as much of a natural birthright to the back roads as the randy pair of HIV-positive misanthropes in *The Living End*, the lost boy of *My Own Private Idaho*, the amateur Cheyenne revolutionaries of *Powwow Highway*, the abused children of *Guncrazy* and *Motorama*.

#### **Ticket to nowhere**

Road movies are too cool to address seriously socio-political issues. Instead, they express the fury and suffering at the extremities of civilised life, and give their restless protagonists the false hope of a one-way ticket to nowhere. As the Indian mystic M. N. Chatterjee put it, if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there. The journey's the thing, and anyone who thinks differently is just wasting gas. Once Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper declared "the American Dream" as their destination, it became obvious that where you were going hardly mattered, and that the Dream was the road itself, even (or especially) if it runs in a circle and ends in hapless carnage.

And it always did. Like noir and its living-dead neo-incarnations, road movies are cowed in lurking menace, spontaneous mayhem and dead-end fatalism, never more than a few roadstops away from abject lawlessness and haphazard bloodletting. The genre has always been inherently schizoid, offsetting our mad romance with the internal combustion engine, upholstery, tailfins and endless asphalt with a seemingly unpreventable collapse into failure and pain. From *Detour* (1945), with its shallow graves and deathful fits of bad luck, to the naive highway cop shotgunned off his motorcycle in a Darwinian display of random selection at the end of *Electra Glide in Blue* (1973), to the glossy shotgun weddings of *Wild at Heart*, *True Romance*, *Falling Down* and *Kalifornia*, road movies have always been songs of the doomed, warnings that once you enter the open hinterlands between cities, you're on your own.

The pattern, and mood, of the road trip haunts us like an archetype, from Ulysses to

Kerouac, from the Diaspora and the settling of the American West to the real-life road movies starring Christ, Columbus, Jayne Mansfield and Neal Armstrong. Road movies have become ineluctably tied to the cheap-and-nasty aesthetics of rock 'n' roll (with Chuck Berry's 'Route 66' as the first unofficial anthem), rebel youth culture and the no-future potential of crazed automobile use – and therefore to the hormone-shocked, Mustang-crazed libido of every modern teenager since James Dean picked the black marble on the road to Salinas. The geography of the car, and of post-war car culture, has travelled a contemporaneous vector, the vehicles transforming from stately, tank-sized comfort zones to agents of speed, sex and sleek design, just as the roving sprawl of the first roads has given way to the Gordian-knot engineering of cloverleaf freeways.

Few cultural developments outside the first atomic bomb test at Los Alamos have had such a decisive impact on movies. The structure of the car, designed both to conform to our bodies' shortcomings and powerfully extend them, has become how we regard the world (through the screen-like, Panavision-shaped lens of the windscreen and, like a miniature movie within a movie, the rear view mirror), how we measure the width of continents (which have all become significantly smaller), how we both close ourselves up within our self-made universes and gain access to every corner of the globe.

Many road movies have explored our complex relationship with the interior of the automobile: the quiet observation of a bank robbery from the back seat of the getaway car in Joseph H. Lewis' *Gun Crazy* (1949), the chilling menace of the highway cop tapping on the driver-side window in *Psycho* (1960), the seedy sedan intimacy of the door-to-door Bible hawkers in *Salesman* (1969), Dennis Weaver's car's slow morph into an iron maiden of paranoid tension in *Duel* (1971). One of the most eloquent car scenes anywhere is in the otherwise non-road movie *Prime Cut* (1972), in which a life-or-death wheatfield pursuit stops dead for all

**Road movies are cowed in menace, never more than a few roadstops from lawlessness and haphazard bloodletting**

concerned when an empty Cadillac is noisily eaten by a grain combine.

Implicit in the hermetic inner world of the car is its antagonistic association with the outside world and with the thoroughfares it travels – as well as the brute reality that the question posed by the travelling itself, to the extent that it represents a question, may never satisfactorily be answered. The annals of modern highway lore are filled with treks cut short by hard luck and cruelty, the travellers ground to a permanent halt in the loneliest, most degenerated backwaters. Your average road movie turns the too-real despair of transient losers into modern myth, outfitting it with moviehouse spectacles (psychosis, gunplay, mad chases, post-apocalyptic anarchy, you name it) and colouring it a laconic suede-shoe blue. "You ever been in a time machine?" arch-felon Kevin Costner asks his young, kidnapped passenger in Clint Eastwood's *A Perfect World*. "There's the future," he says, pointing forward through the windscreen, "and there, well, there's the past," pointing back to the ass-end of the highway they're on. "This here's the present, Philip – enjoy it while you can."

Though a deathless movie species, road movies are rarely hits. If mass audiences aren't exactly rabid for causeway action, short of *T2*, perhaps that's because the genre epitomises so much of what's uneasy and lost and temporal about our culture. But not all industry band-wagons are fuelled by greed, and box-office receipts alone do not make up the zeitgeist (otherwise we'd all be talking dinosaurs, and outside Roger Corman, no one has bothered).

Perhaps the current craze to make films about hot asphalt, purple T-Birds and allusions to the Eisenhower era constitutes a conscious effort by movie-makers to wire into the present-day thirst for the road movie topos by way of nostalgia for the Ghosts of Counterculture Past. (Given a reasonable passage of years, every decade has its plunderable clichés: *True Romance* evokes the 50s with the ghost of Elvis, the 60s with its *Bonnie and Clyde* simulacrum, the 70s with Sonny Chiba movies, and the 80s with Joel Silver and John Woo references.) The road movie is finally perceived as a means and end to itself, finally a franchised form, and suddenly the subject isn't the road so much as the Road, invoking the mode's legacy as the main text to a degree Monte Hellman and Richard



From the outskirts: Matt Dillon hangs out on the ragged edges of pop culture in Gus Van Sant's 'Drugstore Cowboy', below



'Paris, Texas': Wenders' European dream, with Dean Stockwell and Harry Dean Stanton hitting the hard shoulder, above

Queens of the road: Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon give the genre a female overhaul in 'Thelma & Louise', below



'Wild at Heart' and weird on the blacktop: Nicolas Cage takes rock 'n' roll surrealism for a spin, above

Sarafian (director of *Vanishing Point*, perhaps the aboriginal moment for fatuous co-optations) wouldn't have dared. "And now we return to Bullitt, already in progress," chirps Christian Slater as he pulls his Caddy on to Sunset Boulevard in *True Romance* – and he speaks for a whole generation of movie heads.

#### Just a wheel turn from madness

*Thelma & Louise* couldn't have existed without a tradition of macho-dominated interstate rambling to counteract. Tamra Davis' *Gun Crazy*, far from being a remake of Lewis' *Gun Crazy*, rehashes *Badlands* for Judy Blume fans, revisiting the mobile homes, roadside churches and ennui of 70s teen fiction. *Kalifornia* also reworks the Charlie Starkweather scenario, but with a particularly odious post-modern twist: the film's serial killer and bimbo sweetheart are paired with a couple of urban art yuppies in the process of researching serial killers by visiting their homes.

Whereas *True Romance* and the other, upcoming Quentin Tarantino-scripted on-the-run metamovie *Natural Born Killers* fuse the movie-soaked sensibilities of the film-makers with those of the characters, *Kalifornia* displays little more than a thorough knowledge of clichés amid its TV-ad cinematography and slumming stars. It's a predictable enough fate for a mainstream project longing to express outlaw impulses it cannot properly access – the movie's hapless self-reflexivity derives from a deficit of truth and substance, not from some neo-Godardian introspection. What you get are films so reflexive there's simply no *there* there, only a trunkload of undigested images from older movies. The recent titles themselves are dead giveaways to the movies' scavenged, self-conscious tone: *Coupe de Ville*, *Pink Cadillac*, *Promised Land*, *Roadside Prophets*, *Road Trip to Heaven*, and so on – and perhaps chintziest of all, *Road Scholar*, a documentary of the book by the same title by poet and radio commentator Andrei Codrescu.

A Romanian naturalised to the United States since the 60s, Codrescu took to the road in a 1968 Caddy, armed with a book advance, a photographer and a film crew. Always a droll, sardonic essayist about the mad hilarities of the American quotidian, Codrescu acknowledges in both film and book how such an artificially conceived and prepared peregrination is a

doubtful project at best. He's right, though his declamations hardly mitigate *Road Scholar*'s strained sense of self-importance. Codrescu is merely a member of an expanding demi-monde, exploiting the road movie's seepage into other forms, including such highly publicised volumes of New Journalism as *Road Fever*, *Highway 50*, *Storm Country* and *South of Haunted Dreams* (with their portentous subtitles "A Personal Journey Through the Mid-Atlantic" or "A Journey Through the Heart of America"), as well as concept rock albums, performance art and photo essays (beginning with Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip*). Not to mention the mounting slew of non-fiction cinema: Robert Kramer's four-and-a-half-hour epic *Route 1*, Errol Morris' memory lane chase *The Thin Blue Line*, Ulrike Ottinger's nine-hour, real-time exploration of Outer Mongolia, *Taiga*, and Robert Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's *Where Are We?: Our Trip Through America*. The wrongheadedness of such earnestly undertaken expeditions, searching as they do for truth or, if you will, Hopper's American Dream, has been understood in real road movies since Farley Granger was shot down in the rain in *They Live by Night*. Whatever might be found on the road, it won't resemble any universal truth, it will elude those explicitly searching for it, and it won't be easy to tie to the hood and bring home.

In an age where the American populace can create controversy over which image of Elvis – young or old/bloated – to put on a postage stamp, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the road movie cannot help but turn in on itself, exploiting its own heritage. This may be a matter of socio-economic torque. In the post-war years, the desperate flight to greener pastures seemed a viable recourse for many Americans sick of rummaging through the trash heap of their decimated lives. Come the 60s, the reckless joyride became the most authentic, expressive and rowdiest way for a new generation of self-exploring Americans to redefine their territory and thumb their noses at their parents' Levittown-style middle class of two-car garages

**Characters hit the road less for any plot-driven reason than because they've seen a lot of movies and that's what you do**

and automated kitchens. Today, there's little frontier to speak of and little hope of national rediscovery, and the movies confirm the general sense of Generation-X defeatism by transforming the travelled landscape into a bricolage of cinematic tropes – especially the omnipresent stench of burnt gunpowder and smoking bodies – and by being, with or without a helpful dollop of irony, unabashed Road Movies. Characters hit the road less for any concrete, plot-driven reason than because they've seen a lot of movies and that's what you do. Objectively speaking, what could be more of a dead end?

How far can a genre self-reflex before, like a snake eating its tail, it simply disappears? More than likely, road movies will suffer the further humiliations of sanitisation, learn-about-yourself melodramas à la *Rain Man*, and media saturation (we may already have peaked with the geriatric romance-in-a-hotrod comedy *Over the Hill*, starring Olympia Dukakis), setting up an inevitable tension. Predicated for the most part on despair, heartbreak and post-noir melancholia, on the precept that road trips never end as we hope and instead thrust us into an environment ruled by misfortune and raw jungle hate, road movies are bound to frustrate any effort to shoehorn them into multiplex formulas.

Instead, we may be nearing the age of the anti-road movie, or the revisionist road movie, when the genre will autonomously shuck off the blubber of the mainstream marketplace and once again return to the ragged outskirts of pop culture so beautifully travelled in its best films – *Detour*, *Gun Crazy*, *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*, *Weekend*, *Salesman*, *Two-Lane Blacktop*, *Duel*, *Kings of the Road*, *Thieves Like Us*, *Going Places*, *Stroszek*, *Paris, Texas*, *Drugstore Cowboy*. Perhaps once again the image of a faded luxury model from yesteryear soaring through the heat ripples and fog and endless night of a barren turnpike or overgrown backstreet, dashed hopes trailing behind it like so much exhaust, will conjure not the tired post-modern clichés of a hyperactive pop consciousness, but the mysterious, detrital lyricism of human hunger and loneliness we've all felt on the road ourselves, the engine humming beneath us, our future sprawling out across the land like cruel desert sunlight, just a wheel turn from madness, and just a few miles from home.

'Kalifornia' opens in the UK in early March



Stanley Kubrick's futuristic  
1968 epic '2001: A Space Odyssey'  
still has the power to startle.  
Mark Crispin Miller re-examines  
its subversive vision of power,  
sex and isolation

# 2001 A COLD DESCENT



RONALD GRANT



Dear Mr Kubrick: My pupils are still dilated, and my breathing sounds like your soundtrack. I don't know if this poor brain will survive another work of the magnitude of *2001*, but it will die (perhaps more accurately "go nova") happily if given the opportunity. Whenever anybody asks me for a description of the movie, I tell them that it is, in sequential order: Anthropological, camp, McLuhan, cybernetic, psychedelic, religious. That shakes them up a lot. Jesus, man, where did you get that incredibly good technical advice? Whenever I see the sun behind a round sign, I start whistling *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. My kettledrum impression draws the strangest looks.

Dear Mr Kubrick: Although I have my doubts that your eyes will ever see this writing, I still have hopes that some secretary will neglect to dispose of my letter. I have just seen your motion picture and I believe – please, words, don't fail me now – that I have never been so moved by a film – so impressed – awed – etc. The music was absolutely on a zenith. 'The Blue Danube' really belonged in some strange way, and the main theme with its building crescendos was more beautiful than John Lennon's 'I Am the Walrus', and from me that's a compliment. The story in *Life* magazine, of course, showed the most routine scenes, as *Life* has a tendency to eliminate any overwhelming virtue in a motion picture, and the three best scenes were lumped together and were almost unrecognizable. But lest I run off at the mouth, let me conclude by saying that if the Academy of ill-voted Oscars doesn't give you a multitude of awards in 1969, I will resign from humanity and become a soldier.

Twenty-five years later, Kubrick's fan mail has an unintended poignancy – in part (but only in part) because the letters are so obviously dated. Those fierce accolades are pure 60s. To re-read such letters now – and Jerome Agel's 1970 *The Making of Kubrick's 2001*, the ecstatic, crazed *homage* that includes them – is to look back on a cultural moment that now seems as remote from our own as, say, those hairy screamers of pre-history, erect with murderous purpose at the water hole, might seem from the low-key Doctor Heywood R. Floyd, unconscious on his umpteenth voyage to the moon.

## Privilege and power

The film's first devotees were knocked out, understandably, by its "incredible and irrevocable splendor" (as another letter-writer phrased it). Others were troubled – also understandably – by the film's disturbing intimation that, since "the dawn of man" so many, many centuries ago, the human race has got nowhere fast. That subversive notion is legible not only in the famous match cut from the sunlit bone to the nocturnal spacecraft (two tools, same deadly white, both *descending*) but throughout the first two sections of the narrative: indeed, the negation of the myth of progress may be the film's basic structural principle. Between the starved and bickering apes and their smooth, affable descendants there are all sorts of broad distinc-

**Facing up to the future: Kubrick's isolated astronaut Bowman (Keir Dullea) heads into the unknown, bombarded by the great galactic light show, opposite**

tions, but there is finally not much difference – an oblique, uncanny similarity that recurs in every human action represented.

In 2001, for example, the men feed unenthusiastically on ersatz sandwiches and steaming pads of brightly coloured mush – food completely cooked (to say the least) and slowly masticated, as opposed to the raw flesh furtively bolted by the now carnivorous apes; and yet both flesh and mush appear unappetising, and both are eaten purely out of need. Similarly, in 2001 the men are just as wary and belligerent, and just as quick to square off against tribal enemies, as their tense, shrieking forebears – although, as well-trained professionals and efficient servants of the state, they confront the other not with piercing screams and menacing gestures but by suddenly sitting very still and speaking very quietly and slowly: "... I'm... sorry, Doctor Smyslov, but, uh... I'm really not at liberty to discuss this..." Thus Doctor Floyd, although seated in an attitude of friendly languor (legs limply crossed, hands hidden in his lap), fights off his too inquisitive Soviet counterpart just as unrelentingly as, tens of thousands of years earlier, the armed apes had crushed their rivals at the water hole (which recurs here as a small round plastic table, bearing drinks, and again the locus of contention). Now, as then, the victor obviously wields a handy instrument of his authority (although this time it's a briefcase, not a femur); and now, as then, the females merely look on as the males fight it out. (There is no matriarchal element in Kubrick's myth.)

More generally, the scientists and bureaucrats, and the comely corporate personnel who serve them (polite young ladies dressed in pink or white), are all sealed off – necessarily – from the surrounding vastness; and here too the cool world of 2001 seems wholly unlike, yet is profoundly reminiscent of, the arid world where all began. Back then, the earthlings would seek refuge from the predatory dangers of the night by wedging themselves, terrified, into certain natural hiding places and even in daylight would never wander far from that found 'home' or from one another, even though the world – such as it was – lay all around them. Likewise, their remote descendants are all holed up against the infinite and its dangers – not in terror any more (they seem to have forgotten terror), and surely not in rocky niches (their habitats are state creations, quietly co-run by Hilton, Bell and Howard Johnson), but in a like state of isolation in the very midst of seeming endlessness.

Herein the world of 2001 recalls the pre-historic world *before* the monolith gives 'man' his first idea; once that happens, the species is no longer stuck in place. Made strong by their new carnivorous diet, and with their hands now mainly used to smash and grab, the ape-men have already visibly outgrown their former quadrupedal posture (they are *standing* – for the first time – when they come back to the water hole), and so are ready to move on. "A new animal was abroad on the planet, spreading slowly out from the African heartland," writes Arthur C. Clarke in his novelisation of the film – which, of course, elides that historic

## 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY A SYNOPSIS

**The prehistoric past.** A small tribe of apemen lives on a rocky hillside, in constant terror of neighbouring carnivores and quarrelling with a rival tribe for the possession of a water hole. One morning they wake to find before them a mysterious black monolith. When their initial terror has subsided, one of them, inspired by the slab, learns how to use bone clubs to hunt for food. Four million years later, space scientist Doctor Heywood R. Floyd arrives on the moon to investigate a similar black slab which has been found buried deep below the surface and is now emitting powerful signals in the direction of Jupiter. The giant spaceship 'Discovery' sets out on a nine-month voyage to Jupiter, manned by astronauts Bowman and Poole, with three colleagues kept in a state of hibernation and a new and

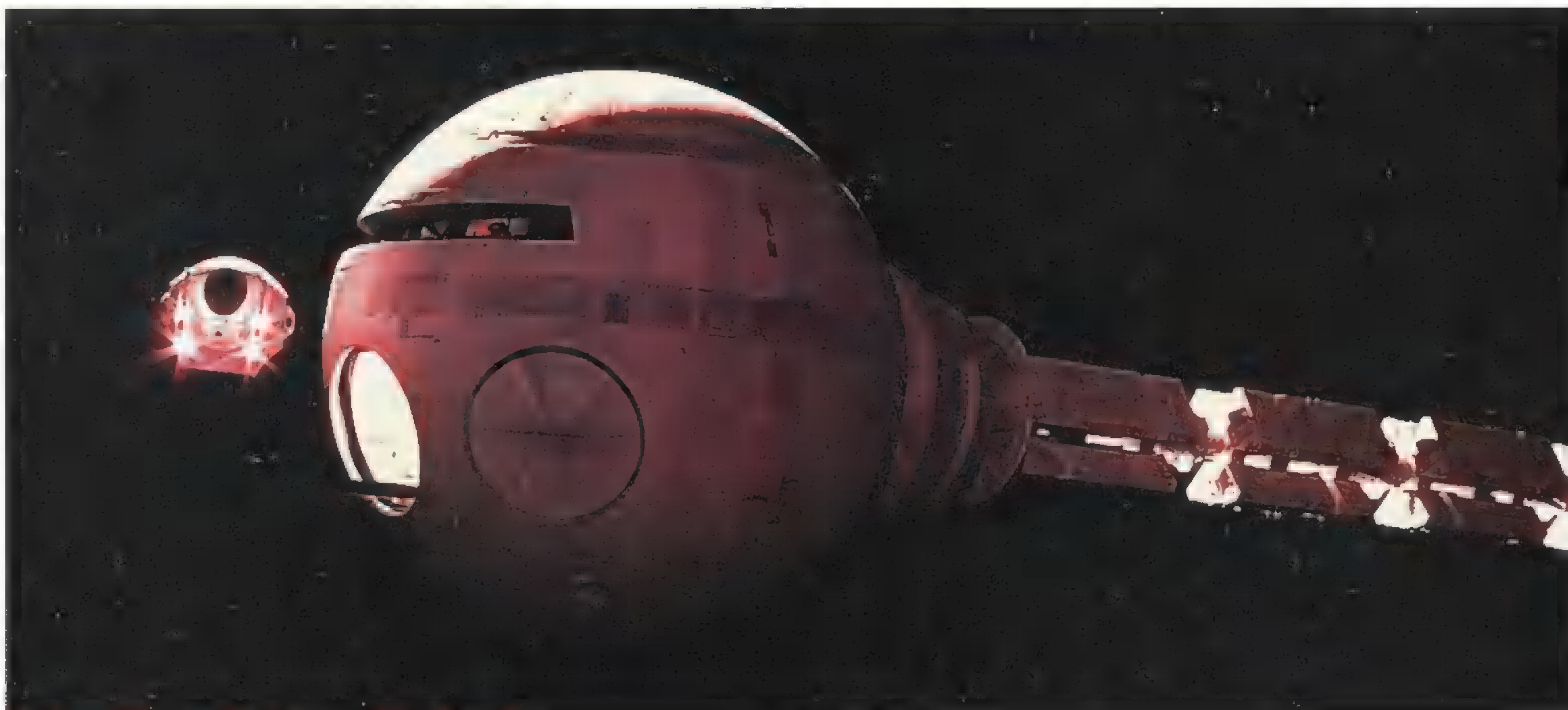
infallible computer, HAL 9000, in overall control. In deep space HAL deliberately causes a minor failure, and when Poole ventures outside the ship in his space pod to repair the fault, HAL terminates the life functions of the hibernating crewmen and maroons him in space. Bowman reduces a contrite and fear-stricken HAL to impotence by disconnecting his memory banks, and continues his journey alone. Approaching Jupiter, he sees a strange black slab in orbit among the planet's moons; suddenly he is sucked into a new dimension, where man's laws of time and space no longer apply, an infinity of whirling landscapes, worlds in creation and exploding galaxies. Finally he finds himself in an elegant apartment, and his aged and dying self is confronted by one of the mysterious monoliths. He reaches out towards it, to be born again, the fetus of a new, transcended Man.

episode, along with all the rest of human history, thereby taking us from one great dusk to another. When 'Moon-Watcher' (as Clarke calls him) exultantly flings his natural cudgel high into the air, that reckless gesture is the film's only image of abandon and its last 'human' moment of potentiality – for, as the match cut tells us, it's all downhill from there.

However, although the film takes us straight from one twilight moment to another, the first is very different from the next – indeed, the two are almost perfect opposites. At first, humankind nearly dies out because there is no science: no one knows how to make anything, and so those feeble simians cannot fight off the big cats, bring down the nutritious pigs, take over fertile territory, set up proper shelters and otherwise proceed to clear away the obstacles, and wipe out the extremes, of mere nature – through that gradual subjection turning into men. And yet that long, enlightened course of ours (the film suggests) has only brought us back to something too much like the terminus we once escaped – only this time it is not the forces of mere nature (instincts and elements) that threaten to unmake us, but the very instrumentality that originally saved us. In 2001, in other words, there is *too much* science, *too much* made, the all-pervasive product now degrading us almost as nature used to do. The match cut tells us not just that we're on the downswing once again, but that, this time, what has reduced us is our absolute containment by, and for the sake of, our own efficient apparatus. Hence Doctor Floyd is strapped inside one such sinking ship, and quite unconscious of it, whereas Moon-Watcher simply *used* his weapon, and did so with his eyes wide open. That first image of the dozing scientist is a transcendent bit of satire, brilliantly implying just how thoroughly man has been unmade – stupefied, deprived, bereft – by the smart things of his own making: a falling-off, and/or quasi-reversion, that is perceptible only through critical contrast with what precedes it.

Emboldened by hard protein, the apes at once start making war: mankind's first form ►





BRISTOL POSTING AND DESIGN

**“Just as the animal appetite has, in those white spaces, been ruthlessly denied, so have all other pleasures”**

◀ of organised amusement, Kubrick suggests, and (as all his films suggest) one whose attraction can never be overcome by the grandiose advance of ‘civilisation’ – on the contrary. In Kubrick’s universe, the modern state is itself a vast war machine, an enormous engine of displaced (male) aggression whose purpose is to keep itself erect by absorbing the instinctual energies of all and diverting them into some gross spectacular assault against the other. These lethal – and usually suicidal – strikes are carried out by the lowliest members of the state’s forces (the infantry, the droogs, the grunts; ‘King’ Kong, Jack Torrance) against an unseen enemy, and/or – ultimately – some isolated woman, while those at the rear, and at the top, sit back and enjoy the rout vicariously. There is, in short, a stark division of labour in that cold, brilliant, repetitious world of jails and palaces, hospitals and battlefields. It is the function of the lowly to express – within strict limits, and only at appointed times and places – the bestial animus that has long since been repressed and stigmatised, and that (therefore) so preoccupies the rest of us. Thus Alex’s droogs, the grunts under Cowboy’s brief command, and the doomed Jack Torrance all revert, as they move in on their respective prey, to the hunched and crouching gait of their first ancestors sneaking towards the water hole.

Meanwhile, it is the privilege of those at the top – “the best people”, as certain characters in *Barry Lyndon* and *The Shining* term them – to sit and (sometimes literally) look down on all that gruesome monkey business, sometimes pretending loudly to deplore it, yet always quietly enjoying it (whether or not they have themselves arranged it in the first place). Such animal exertion is, for them, a crucial spectatorial delight, as long as it happens well outside their own splendid confines – at the front, or in the

ring, or in some remote suburban house, or in the servants’ quarters at the Overlook, or in the ruins of Vietnam.

When, on the other hand, someone goes completely ape right there among them, that feral show is not at all a pleasure but an indecorum gross and shattering – whether played as farce, like General Turgidson’s clumsy tussle with the Soviet ambassador in *Dr Strangelove* (“Gentlemen, you can’t fight in *here*! This is the War Room!”), or as a grotesque lapse, like Barry Lyndon’s wild and ruinous attack on his contemptuous stepson. Such internal outbursts threaten “the best people” very deeply: not only by intimating a rebellious violence that might one day destroy them, and their creatures, from without (as nearly happens to Marcus Crassus in *Spartacus*, or as happens to Sergeant Hartman in *Full Metal Jacket*), but by reminding those pale, cordial masters that, although they like to see themselves as hovering high above the brutal impulse, they themselves still have it in them. That rude reminder the pale masters cannot tolerate, for their very self-conception, and their power, are based directly on the myth of total difference between themselves and those beneath them. It is the various troops and thugs, those down and out there on the ground, who do the lethal simian dance, because they are primitives. We who do our work in chairs, observing those beneath us, setting them up for this or that ordeal and then watching as they agonise, are *therefore* beings of a higher order, through this sedentary act confirming our ‘humanity’.

### Conditioning and castration

Doctor Floyd is just such a ‘human’ being. If he never appears gazing coolly down on others as they suffer, as do the generals in *Paths of Glory* or the Ludovico experts in *A Clockwork Orange*, that

omission does not connote any relative kindness, but is merely one reflection of his total separation from reality: Doctor Floyd never callously looks down on suffering because, within his bright, closed universe-within-a-universe, there is no suffering (nor any physical intensity or emotional display of any kind) for him to look down on. For that matter, Doctor Floyd never really looks at anything, or anyone, until the climax of his top-secret visit to the moon, when he looks intently at the monolith, and even touches it (or tries to). Prior to that uncanny action, the scientist’s gaze is, unless belligerently opaque (as it becomes in his brief ‘fight’ with Smyslov), consistently casual, affable and bored, the same pleasant managerial mask whether it confronts some actual stranger’s face, the video image of his daughter’s face, or that synthetic sandwich.

Although he floats, throughout, at an absolute remove from any site of others’ gratifying pain, Doctor Floyd is nonetheless inclined, like all his peers in Kubrick’s films, to see himself as definitively placed *above* the simian horde – which is, in his case, not just some cowering division or restive troupe of gladiators, but his own planet’s entire population. As he would presume himself in every way superior to the proto-men of aeons back, so does he presume himself – and, of course, the Council, which he represents – far superior to his fellow-beings way back “down” (as he persists in putting it) on earth. Those masses, he argues, need to be protected from the jarring news that there might be another thinking species out there – hence “the need for absolute secrecy in this”. “I’m sure you’re all aware of the extremely grave potential for cultural shock and social disorientation contained in this present situation,” he tells the staff at Clavius, “if the facts were suddenly made public without





adequate preparation – and conditioning.” That last proviso makes it clear that Doctor Floyd is, in fact, ideologically a close relation to those other, creepier doctors at the Ludovico Institute; the whole euphemistic warning of “potential cultural shock” betrays his full membership of that cold, invisible elite who run the show in nearly all Kubrick’s films, concerned with nothing but the preservation of their own power. Surely, what Doctor Floyd imagines happening “if the facts were suddenly made public” would be uncannily like what we’ve seen already: everybody terrified at first, and then, perhaps, the smart ones putting two and two together and moving, quickly, to knock off those bullying others who have monopolised what everybody needs – “the facts” having instantly subverted those others’ ancient claims to an absolute supremacy.

The film itself is thus subversive, indirectly questioning Floyd’s representative ‘humanity’ through satiric contrast with his grunting antecedents. At first, the safe and slumbering Doctor Floyd seems merely antithetical to the ready, raging apes. Whereas those primates – once they have tasted meat, then blood – were all potential, standing taut and upright at the water hole, their leader fiercely beckoning them forward, Doctor Floyd is placid, sacked-out, slack: as smooth of face as they were rough and hairy, as still as they were noisy and frenetic, as fully dressed (zipped up and buckled in) as they were bare – and, above or underneath it all, as soft as they were hard. If they were the first exemplars of the new and savage species *homo occidens* (and only secondarily, if at all, fit to be entitled *homo sapiens*), the scientist, unconscious in his perfect chair, exemplifies the old and ravaged species *homo sedens*. As he dozes comfily, his weightless arm bobs slow and flaccid at his side, his hand hangs lax,

while his sophisticated pen floats like a mini-spacecraft in the air beside him. It is a comic image of advanced detumescence – effective castration – as opposed (or so it seems) to the heroic shots of Moon-Watcher triumphing in ‘his’ new knowledge of the deadly and yet death-defying instrument: his sinewy arm raised high, his grip tight, his tool in place, he seems to roar in ecstasy as he pulverises the bones lying all around him (“Death, thou shalt die!”), and the pigs crash lifeless to the ground, as limp as Doctor Floyd looks minutes later.

### The seductive waltz

Although seemingly so different from the simians, however, Doctor Floyd is not only their enfeebled scion but also, deep down, their brother in aggressiveness: a relation only gradually perceptible in his various muted repetitions of the apes’ outright behaviours. As his subdued showdown with the Soviets recalls the frenzied action at the water hole, so does his mystified authority recall Moon-Watcher’s balder primacy, the scientist relying not, of course, on screaming violence to best his enemies and rally his subordinates, but on certain quiet managerial techniques (body language, tactical displays of informality, and so on). His inferiors are just as abject towards him as Moon-Watcher’s were towards that head monkey, although the later entities display their deference towards the manager not, of course, by crouching next to him and combing through his hair for nits, but just by sucking up to him, placating him with nervous, eager smiles and stroking him with witless praises: “Y’know, that was an excellent speech you gave us, Heywood!” “It certainly was!” “I’m sure it beefed up morale a helluva lot!” In such dim echoes of the apes’ harsh ur-society we can discern the lingering note of their belligerence –

**The erotic ballet of vessels in free fall: Kubrick’s spacecraft, opposite, are floating shells within which humans stalk corridors in chilly isolation, above**

as we can still perceive their war-like attitude throughout the antiseptic world of their descendants, who are still cooped up in virtual fortresses and still locked into an arrangement at once rigidly hierarchical and numbingly conformist, the clean men as difficult to tell apart as were their hunched hairy forebears.

Thus is the primal animus still here; indeed, it is now more dangerous than ever, warfare having evolved from heated manual combat to the cool deployment of orbiting atomic weapons (one of which sails gently by as ‘The Blue Danube’ begins). Yet while the animus has taken on apocalyptic force, its expression among human beings is (paradoxically, perhaps) oblique, suppressed, symbolic, offering none even of that crude delight which the near-anhedonic simians had known: the thrill of victory (as the sportscasters often put it), and, inextricable from that, the base kinetic entertainment of (as Alex often puts it) “the old ultra-violence”. Such overt and bestial pleasures have been eliminated from the computerised supra-world of the Council and its employees (although not from life back “down” on earth, as *A Clockwork Orange* will, from its very opening shot, remind us). Just as the animal appetite has, in those white spaces, been ruthlessly denied, so have all other pleasures, which in Kubrick’s universe (as in Nietzsche’s and in Freud’s) derive straight from that ferocious source. In the world of Doctor Heywood Floyd, it is only the machines that dance and couple, man having had, it would appear, even his desires absorbed into the apparatus that, we thought, was meant to gratify them.

As ‘The Blue Danube’ starts to play, its old, elegant cadences rising and falling so oddly ►





**“The stewardess, in her stiff white pants-suit and round white padded hat, looks like a sort of corporate nun”**

◀ and charmingly against this sudden massive earthrise, the various spacecraft floating by as if in heavenly tranquillity, there is, of course, no human figure in the frame – nor should there be, for in this “machine ballet” (as Kubrick has called it) live men and women have no place. Out here, and at this terminal moment, all human suppleness, agility and lightness, all our bodily allure, have somehow been transferred to those exquisite gadgets. Thus the hypnotic circularity of Strauss’s waltz applies not to the euphoric roundabout of any dancing couple, but to the even wheeling of that big space station. Thus, while those transcendent items sail through the void with the supernal grace of seraphim, the stewardess attending Doctor Floyd staggers down the aisle as if she’s had a stroke, the zero gravity and her smart “grip shoes” giving her solicitous approach the absurd look of bad ballet.

Her image connotes not only an aesthetic decline (Kubrick had idealised the ballerina-as-artist in his early *Killer’s Kiss*), but a pervasive sexual repression. With the machines doing all the dancing, bodies are erotically dysfunctional – an incapacity suggested by Kubrick’s travesties of dance. In *A Clockwork Orange* he would again present a gross parody of ballet: in the scene at the Derelict Casino, where Billy-boy’s droogs, getting ready to gang-rape the “weepy young devotchka”, sway and wrestle with her on the stage, their ugly unity and her pale struggle in their midst suggesting a balletic climax turned to nightmare. There, eros is negated crudely by male violence. In *2001*, the mock ballet implies no mere assault on the erotic but its virtual extirpation, its near-supernatation in the world of the machine. Here, every pleasurable impulse must be channelled into the efficient maintenance of that machine, which therefore exerts as inhibitive

an influence as any fierce religion. Stumbling down the aisle, the stewardess looks, in her stiff white pants-suit and round white padded hat (designed to cushion blows against the ceiling), like a sort of corporate nun, all female attributes well hidden. And so it is appropriate that, as she descends on the unconscious Doctor Floyd, her slow approach does not recall, say, Venus coming down on her Adonis, but suggests instead a porter checking on a loose piece of cargo, as she grabs his floating pen and re-attaches it to his oblivious trunk.

### Hermetic spaces

The stewardess dances not a fantasy of some delightful respite from the waking world, but only further service to, and preparation for, that world. Likewise ‘The Blue Danube’ refers not to the old sexual exhilarations of (to quote Lord Byron) the “seductive waltz”, but only to the smooth congress of immense machines. As Doctor Floyd slumps in his chair, the flight attendant re-attaching his loose implement, the very craft that holds them both (a slender, pointed shuttle named *Orion*) is itself approaching, then slides with absolute precision into, the great bright slit at the perfect centre of the circular space station, the vehicles commingling as they do throughout the film – and as the living characters do not, as far as we can see. *Orion* having finally ‘docked’, the waltz comes to its triumphant close – and Kubrick cuts, on that last note, to an off-white plastic grid, an automatic portal sliding open with a long dull whirr. There first appears, seated stiffly in the circular compartment, another stewardess, a shapely and impassive blonde dressed all in pink and manning the controls, and then, two seats away from her, there again is Doctor Floyd, now wide awake and holding his big briefcase up across his lap like a protec-

tive shield. He zips it shut. “Here you are, sir,” she says politely (and ambiguously). “Main level, please.” “Alright,” he answers, getting up. “See you on the way back.”

The human characters are thus maintained – through their very posture and deportment, the lay-out of the chill interiors, their meaningless reflexive courtesies – in total separation from each other, within (and for the sake of) their machines, which meanwhile interpenetrate as freely as Miltonic angels. And yet there is a deeply buried hint that even up in these hermetic spaces, people are still sneaking off to do the deed. “A blue, woman’s cashmere sweater has been found in the restroom,” a robotic female voice announces, twice, over the space station’s PA system just after Doctor Floyd’s arrival. That abandoned sweater may well be the evidence of the same sort of furtive quickie that takes place in General Turgidson’s motel room in *Dr Strangelove*, or that, in *A Clockwork Orange*, a doctor and nurse enjoy behind the curtains of a hospital bed while Alex lies half-dead nearby. Given Kubrick’s penchant for self-reference, it may be that, in conceiving that aside about the cashmere sweater, he had in mind the moment in *Lolita* when Charlotte Haze, speaking to her wayward daughter on the telephone (the nymphet having been exiled for the summer to Camp Climax), querulously echoes this suspicious news: “You lost your new sweater?... In the woods?”

Such details reveal yet another crucial similarity between the simian and human worlds of *2001*. For all the naturalness of their state before the monolith, we never see the apes attempting sex, although we see them trying to find food, to get some sleep, to fight their enemies. That gap in Kubrick’s overview of their condition is surely not a consequence of prudishness (no longer a big problem by the mid-





60s), but would appear deliberate – a negative revelation of the thorough harshness of the simians' existence. The apes are simply too hungry, and too scared, to be thinking about sex, which would presumably occur among them only intermittently, in nervous one-shot bursts – much as in the world of Doctor Floyd, where everyone is much too busy for anything other than a quick bang now and then, and where there's not a decent place to do it anyway, just as there wasn't at 'the dawn of man'.

### Afloat in the 'free world'

Doctor Floyd's deprivation is not merely genital, however. If, in his asexual state, he is no worse off than his simian forebears, in his continuous singleness he is far more deprived than they. For all their misery, those creatures had at least the warmth and nearness of one another – huddling in the night, there was for them at least that palpable and vivid solace. For that bond – too basic even to be called 'love' – there can be no substitute, nor can it be transcended: "There are very few things in this world that have an unquestionable importance in and of themselves and are not susceptible to debate and rational argument, but the family is one of them," Kubrick once said. If man "is going to stay sane throughout [his] voyage, he must have someone to care about, something that is more important than himself."

Sacked out on the shuttle, Doctor Floyd is the sole passenger aboard that special flight: literally a sign of his status and the importance of his mission, yet the image conveys not prominence but isolation. The man in the chair has only empty chairs around him, with no company other than the tottering stewardess who briefly comes to grab his pen and, on the television screen before him, another faceless couple in another smart conveyance, the two engag-

ing in some mute love-chat (Doctor Floyd is wearing headphones) while the viewer sleeps and the living woman comes and goes. Here too the machine appears to have absorbed the very longings of the personnel who seemingly control it – for even those two mannequins, jabbering theatrically at each other's faces, have more in common with the huddling apes than does Doctor Floyd or any of his colleagues.

Whereas the apes had feared and fed together, here everyone is on the job alone. Efficient service to the state requires that parents and children, wives and husbands all stay away from one another, sometimes forever, the separation vaguely eased, or merely veiled, by the compensatory glimpses now and then available (at great expense) by telephone. For this professional class, the family is no sturdier within the 'free world' than it is under Soviet domination. "He's been doing some underwater research in the Baltics, so, uh, I'm afraid we don't get a chance to see very much of each other these days!" laughs the Russian scientist Irina, a little ruefully, when Floyd asks after her husband. Although (the unseen) Mrs Floyd is, by contrast, still a wife and mother first and foremost, with Heywood the only wage slave in the family, their all-American household is just as atomised as the oppressed Irina's. As we learn from Floyd's perfunctory phone chat with his daughter ("Squirt", he calls her), the members of his upscale menage are all off doing exactly the same things that the apes had done millennia earlier, although, again, the simians did those things collectively, whereas Floyd's 'home' is merely one more empty module. Mrs Floyd, Squirt tells her father, is "gone to shopping" (charged, like Mrs Moon-Watcher, with the feeding of her young), while Floyd himself, of course, is very far away, at work (squaring off against the nation's foes,

**In-flight entertainment: space stewardesses service a cushioned, hermetic world, opposite; Kubrick's cosmonauts are lost in inner space within the spaceship itself, above**

as Moon-Watcher had done). Meanwhile, "Rachel", the woman hired to mind their daughter in their absence, is "gone to the bathroom" (that primal business having long since been relegated to its own spotless cell), and Squirt herself, she says, is "playing" (just as the little monkeys had been doing, except that Squirt – like her father – is all alone).

Every human need is thus indirectly and laboriously served by a vast complex of arrangements – material, social, psychological – that not only takes up everybody's time, but also takes us all away from one another, even as it seems to keep us all "communicating". In the ad-like tableau of Doctor Floyd's brief conversation with the television image of his little girl, there is a poignancy that he cannot perceive, any more than he can grasp the value of his coming home, in person, for her birthday party. "I'm very sorry about it, but I can't," he tells her evenly. "I'm gonna send you a very nice present, though." In offering her a gift to compensate for his being away, Doctor Floyd betrays the same managerial approach to family relations that enables him to carry on, with his usual equanimity, this whole disembodied conversation in the first place; as far as he's concerned, that "very nice present" will make up completely for his absence, just as his mere image on the family telescreen ought to be the *same thing* as his being there. She, however, still appreciates the difference. When he asks what present she would like, with a child's acuity she names the only thing that might produce him for her, since it seems to be the sole means whereby he checks in at home: "A telephone".

For all its underlying sadness, the scene is fraught with absurdist comedy: for that tele- ►



phone is inescapable. It is not just the bright tool through which the family ‘communicates’ but also the very content of that ‘communication’. Here the medium is indeed the message – and there’s nothing to it. “Listen, sweetheart,” says the father, having changed the subject, or so he thinks. “I want you to tell Mummy something for me. Will you remember?” “Yes.” “Tell Mummy that I telephoned. Okay?” “Yes.” “And that I’ll try to telephone again tomorrow. Now will you tell her that?”

The sense of profound emptiness arising from that Pinteresque exchange persists throughout the film, but – once the story shifts to the *Discovery* – in a tone less satiric, more elegiac. The mood now becomes deeply melancholy, as the two astronauts – a pair identical and yet dissociated, like a man and his reflection – eat and sleep and exercise in absolute apartness, both from one another and from all humankind, each one as perfectly shut off within his own routine and within that mammoth twinkling orb as any of their three refrigerated crew-mates. Aboard that sad craft, every seeming dialogue – save one – is in fact a solitudinous encounter with the Mechanism: either a one-way transmission from earth, belatedly and passively received, or a ‘communication’ pre-recorded, or a sinister audience with the soft-spoken HAL, who, it seems, is always on the look-out for ‘his’ chance to eliminate, once and for all, what Dr Strangelove calls “unnecessary human meddling”. That opportunity arises when the astronauts finally sit down, in private (or so they think), and for once talk face-to-face: an actual conversation, independent of technology and therefore a regressive move that HAL appears to punish, fittingly, by *disconnecting* his entire human crew – one sent careering helpless through the deeps, the three “sleeping beauties” each neatly “terminated” in his separate coffin, and the last denied re-admittance to the relative warmth and safety of the mothership. Thus HAL fulfils the paradoxical dynamic of the telephone: seeming to keep everyone ‘in touch’, yet finally cutting everybody off.

Too busy for erotic pleasure, as the apes had been too wretched for it, and much lonelier than those primal ancestors, Doctor Floyd is also much less sensitive than they – a being incapable of wonder, as opposed to the wild-eyed monkey-men. This human incapacity becomes apparent as the scientist very slowly, very calmly strokes – once (and with his whole body in its plastic glove) – the black lustrous surface of the monolith, thereby both repeating and inverting the abject obeisances of his astounded forebears, crouched and screaming at its solid base and touching at its face again and again, hands jerking back repeatedly in terror at its strangeness. The same profound insensitivity is already apparent in that first satiric tableau of the unconscious scientist, who in his (surely dreamless) slumber is as indifferent to the great sublimity around him as the tense simians were heartened by its distant lights and stirred by its expanses. Whereas the most adventurous among them might sometimes look beyond their own familiar niche (as Clarke’s epithet “Moon-Watcher” implies),

those now in charge take that ‘beyond’ for granted, watching nothing but the little television screens before them.

On the phone to Squirt, Doctor Floyd pays no attention to the great home planet wheeling weirdly in the background, just outside the window. Here, as everywhere in 2001, the cool man-made apparatus has lulled its passengers into a necessary unawareness of the infinite, keeping them equilibrated, calm, their heads and stomachs filled, in order to ensure that they stay poised to keep the apparatus, and themselves, on the usual blind belligerent course. Thus boxed in, they calculate, kiss ass, crack feeble jokes about the lousy food – and never think to glance outside. As the moon bus glides above the spectral crags and gullies of the lunar night, and seems to glide on past the low and ponderous pale-blue earth, three-quarters full, the atmosphere sings eerily, exquisitely, in dissonant and breathless ululation. That is until the point of view shifts into the bus completely, with a dizzying hand-held shot that slowly takes us back from the red-lit cockpit, back into the blue-lit cabin, where one of Doctor Floyd’s subordinates first fetches a big bulky ice-blue ‘refreshment’ carrier (himself in a bulky ice-blue spacesuit), then heaves it slowly back to where Doctor Floyd (likewise besuited) sits in regal solitude, perusing documents, with Halvorsen, his second-in-command, attending him (and dressed the same). As that shot settles us well into this snug artificial space, the atonal shrilling of the quasi-angels gradually gives way to the tranquillising beeps and soporific whoosh of the smart bus itself, and to the (necessarily) stupid conversation of its passengers.

Within that ultimate cocoon, those wry little men are disinclined to think on what had come before them, or on what might lie ahead of them, but concentrate instead on their own tribal enterprise, and on their own careers (and, at some length, on those sandwiches), trading bluff banalities as to the mystery awaiting them. “Heh heh. Don’t suppose you have any idea what the damn thing is?” “Heh heh. Wish to hell we did. Heh heh.” Such complacency endures until their instrument, the hapless ‘Bowman,’ is yanked out of their cloistral world of white and goes on his wild psychedelic ride “beyond the infinite”, ending up immured again, but only temporarily – and in a state promising some sort of deliverance from the human fix. At first shattered unto madness, as opposed to the others’ blank composure, and then quickly wrinkled, turning white, as opposed to their uniform boyish smoothness, he finally, from his sudden death bed, reaches up and out towards, then merges with, the great dark monolith, thereby undergoing an ambiguous ‘rebirth’.

## Lonely at the top

In 1968 the ‘futuristic’ world Kubrick satirised so thoroughly was not, despite the title, some 30 years away. The changes the film foretold were imminent. Within a decade 2001 was already getting hard to see – and not just because ever fewer theatre managers would book it, but because its vision was starting to

seem ever less fanciful and ever more naturalistic. In other words, the world that Kubrick could confidently satirise in 1968, looking at it – as an artist must – from a standpoint well *outside* it, would soon begin to look so much like the world that the delighted mass response of the late 60s would soon give way to reactions cooler and less comprehending. Now viewers were less likely to feel “so impressed”, so “awed”, and more likely to reply, “So what?” – an indication not of the film’s datedness, but of its prescience.

Within a decade of the film’s release, the crucial spaces of the human world – where people live, work, shop, see movies, talk about them – had begun increasingly to look like the arid mobile spaces where the people ‘live’ in 2001. The long white sloping corridors of the space station with their sealed windows and fluorescent glare, their hard red contoured chairs and small white plastic tables, now no longer anticipate some eventual trend in architecture but reflect, as if directly, the unilinear vistas within countless shopping malls (which began to dominate the American landscape – urban and suburban – in the late 70s), ‘business parks’ and corporate headquarters. Likewise, those over-bright, hermetic confines, so carefully designed to withstand both the great external vacuum and any possible internal breaches of ‘security’, now seem oddly imitative of the recent condos, hospitals, hotels and dormitories of the west, all of them likewise built *against* the threats of nature and the human swarm. That implicit militarisation of our various homes has surely had profound and imperceptible effects on us – effects that might pertain to the recent invisibility of 2001. The film’s first undergraduate devotees were also members of a student generation likely to assemble in protest – a social tendency soon systematically disabled by the sponsors and practitioners of the New Brutalism, which, as applied specifically to campus architecture in the 70s, was intended to pre-empt further insurrection by eliminating all common spaces, openable windows and any other points or means of mass agitation or discussion. Thus today’s student audience, taught and housed within the quieter system, would tend much less to sense, looking at Floyd’s hushed domain, that there’s something wrong with it.

If it were re-released today, 2001 would be diminished by the multiplex not just because of the smaller screen and poor acoustics, but because the very setting would implicitly subvert the film’s subversive vision. Even if it were brought back to some quaint old movie palace, however, 2001 still could not exert its original satiric impact because the mediated ‘future’ it envisions is now ‘our’ present, and therefore unremarkable: a development not merely architectural but ideological. The world of Doctor Floyd (like the new dorm, mall or hospital) is a world absolutely *managed* – the force controlling it discreetly advertised by the US flag with which the scientist often shares the frame throughout his “excellent speech” at Clavius, and also by the corporate logos – ‘Hilton’, ‘Howard Johnson’, ‘Bell’ – that appear throughout the space station. In 1968, the prospect



of such total management seemed sinister – a patent circumvention of democracy. Today, within the ever-growing ‘private’ sphere the movie adumbrates, that ‘prospect’ seems completely natural.

Whereas audiences back then would often giggle (uneasily, perhaps) at the sight of, say, ‘Howard Johnson’ up there in the heavens, today’s viewers would fail to see the joke, or any problem, now that the corporate logo appears en masse not just wherever films might show, but also in the films themselves, whose atmosphere nowadays is peculiarly hospitable to the costly ensign of the big brand name. We might discern the all-important difference between what was and what now is by comparing Kubrick’s sardonic use of ‘Bell’ and ‘Hilton’ with the many outright corporate plugs crammed frankly into MGM’s appalling ‘sequel’ *2010*, released in 1983. Whereas the (few) plugs in Kubrick’s film were too weird – and the film itself too dark and difficult – to make those corporations any money, in the later film the plugs were so upbeat and unambiguous (the advertisers actually helped out), and there were so many of them, that the whole complex of deals was hailed by advertising mavens as a breakthrough in the commercialisation of cinema. “*2010* is a case of how product placements in the movie are becoming a springboard for joint promotions used to market films,” exulted *Advertising Age* before the film’s release, noting the elaborate plugs for Pan-Am, Sheraton Hotels, Apple Computer, Anheuser-Busch and Omni magazine. (Those outfits evidently liked the insane revisionism of *2010*, which ends with the ecstatic news that what those dark monoliths portended all along, in fact, was the emergence in our heavens of a second sun – so that night will never fall on us again!)

As such colossal advertisers have absorbed the culture since the early 70s, they have helped obscure *2001* by celebrating and encouraging the very drives Kubrick satirises. Indeed, the impulse to retreat from nature, to lead a ‘life’ of perfect safety, regularity and order in some exalted high-tech cell, and to stay forever on the job, solacing oneself from time to time with mere images of some beloved other, is – one might argue – the fundamental psychic cause of advertising. So it makes a certain sense that some of Kubrick’s most ironic images should keep popping up uncannily – that is, without the irony – on billboards and television screens, in newspapers and magazines. “AHH. IT’S LONELY AT THE TOP.” Thus TWA and American Express extol the very state that Kubrick questions – the same unconsciousness and isolation, the same complacency, with the advertisement relying on an image strangely similar to Kubrick’s mordant tableau of the flaccid Doctor Floyd. We likewise recall him in glancing at an ad for Continental, which promotes “a big, comfortable electronic sleeper seat with adjustable headrest, footrest and lumbar support; two abreast seating; and a multi-channel personal stereo entertainment system with your own five-inch screen.”

Such come-ons offer the busy manager a range of artificial substitutes for the warmth he’s left behind – as in *2001*, where it is not only

How the top sales producer manages to close an order... expedite a rush shipment...coordinate his day...



...and still hear all about Swan Lake.

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See and hear how Alex can help make your life more productive. Call 1-800-255-BELL for a free demonstration...  
1-800-255-BELL  
For the business of life.



Tomorrow's world today: advertisements for Bell, top, and Continental, above, recall Kubrick's future vision of isolation and artificial comforts

the “electronic sleeper seat” that is meant as compensation, but, as we have seen, the vivid image of a ‘loved one’ made as if available by Bell. That satiric moment too has been much repeated, and completely neutralised, by advertisers. In a television spot for MCI, a father talks as warmly to his daughter’s image on a tele-screen as if the girl herself were there before him (MCI’s point being, of course, that there is no difference). In an ad for Panasonic, Mom’s voice rising from the answering machine, and forming a protective shield between the needy little girl and her strangely droogish ‘brother’, itself seems as protective as Mom herself would be were she only there. Whereas Kubrick’s telephone is an uncanny instrument – like HAL, a means that would itself dictate the end – Bell’s ads deliberately promote the instrument’s displacement of its human users, offering the telephone itself as your closest “friend”.

Thus has the satiric prophecy of *2001* been blunted by its own fulfilment. And yet there is still more to it than these brief speculations would imply. The fatal human tendency to shut oneself off, wall oneself in, has been accelerated since the film’s release, not only by certain architectural trends, nor simply by the great commercial conquest, but – primarily – by the rise, or spread, of television, which has facilitated that great conquest, enabled (and been all the more enabled by) those architectural developments, and which has at once vindicated Kubrick’s satire and practically extinguished it.

Frankly “wide-eyed”, “thrilled”, “so very lifted” and blithely venturing impassioned and detailed interpretations (with many a bold foray into numerology), Kubrick’s ardent first

fans seem as anachronistic today as, say, the earnest maiden devotees of the Pre-Raphaelites, now that television has universalised a spectatorial attitude so much more jaded and less demanding. The vision that so awed those first several million viewers is now more likely to leave audiences cold – or to get them snickering, since a certain blasé know- ingness pervades the global culture of television as fully as a certain blissed-out recklessness prevailed within the original cult of LSD. The apparent high solemnity of Kubrick’s neo-epic – and the immediate recognisability of its most famous bits – would seem now to require the same sophisticated chuckling that so often greets the *Mona Lisa*, say, or Kane whispering “Rosebud”, or Marion Crane screaming, or any other much-remembered ‘classic’ clip. Even while *2001* was still showing up in theatres, its most vivid touches were already being neutralised by parody – the motif from Strauss’s ‘Zarathustra’ recurring as an automatic joke in numerous commercials (and in Mike Nichols’ *Catch-22*), the famed match cut inspiring bits among stand-up comics, in *Mad* magazine and (brilliantly) in *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*. Today most big releases are immune to parody, since – like mass advertising, countless television shows and virtually every candidate for public office – they come at us already (gently) parodying themselves (and/or their exhausted genre), so as at once to pre-empt any spectatorial ridicule and to solicit the cool viewers’ allegiance by flattering them with an apparent nod to their unprecedented savvy. Every viewer has become a watchful ironist; and in this nervous, jokey atmosphere Kubrick’s genuinely cool and wholly uningratiating film must seem, in spite of its Nietzschean subtext, as archaic and austere (and as hard to follow) as the Latin Mass.

## Artificial voices

Yet while television’s most devoted ironists probably could not enjoy the film, in their plight they also prove the chilling prescience of *2001* – for that pastime is just one more technological absorption, sold as a nice cold substitute for the warmth of actual others. On Comedy Central, “the only all-comedy cable channel”, there is a very hot new show called *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, which features hours and hours of bad old movies, ‘watched’ by a man and his two robots, who, appearing in silhouette along the bottom of the screen as if a row ahead of you, wisecrack throughout the dated spectacle. “A New Thanksgiving tradition,” proclaims a recent ad in *TV Guide*. “Watching 32 straight hours of a human and his robot cohorts rag on cheesy movies while your relatives argue over the white meat.” Thus those born since the release of Kubrick’s film are jeeringly invited to surrender utterly to the machine. Like Frank Poole playing chess with HAL (and losing), and like Doctor Heywood Floyd, who also thinks he knows it all already, they would approach the future in their chairs, alone, needing no friends, since they have those artificial voices – and the sponsors – ‘there’ to crack the jokes, and to laugh along. Thanks to Video Americain for supplying the tapes



● The arrival on the market in 1965 of the first portable video camera, the Sony Portapak, is often cited as the decisive moment in the origin of video art. In the intervening 30 years, three names have come to represent the artform: Nam June Paik, Gary Hill and Bill Viola. Each has produced work in the formats of single-screen tapes and video installations, and each has developed an individual signature: Paik's ironic and playful confrontations of television with the spectacle of itself, Hill's austere dislocations of objects and bodies in space, and Viola's exploration of video as a visionary medium.

The characterisation of Viola as a video visionary has become a glib way into 20 years' worth of work whose consistency and strength emerge from a seemingly paradoxical combination of technical sophistication and a defiantly mystical purpose. The arrival in London of Viola's most recent installation works is a splendid opportunity to test his art against the morass of clichés with which critics too proud of their own powers of rationalisation have surrounded it.

'Unseen Images' at the Whitechapel Art Gallery features seven installation works which together illustrate the dominant themes and techniques of Viola's work in video since the late 70s. Before the benchmark tapes *Chott El-Djerid* [A Portrait in Light and Heat] (1979) and *The Reflecting Pool - Collected Works: 1977-1980*, Viola's work was marked by the structural tendency of the American film-making avant-garde of the late 20s, concentrating on either the mechanics of perception or the properties of the medium itself. From the early 80s Viola's work increasingly incorporated the artist's interest in ancient Oriental and Middle-Eastern cultures, barren 'empty' landscapes and the possibilities for revelation provided by the image's extended duration. From these preoccupations developed the recurring cycles of images that characterise both the installations at the Whitechapel and the most recent of Viola's tapes, *The Passing* (1991).

*The Passing* collapses life and death, light and dark, the transitory and the eternal into a 54-minute dream narrative provoked by the death of the artist's mother in 1991 and the birth of his second son nine months later. But while the impetus for his work may be personal, its language is never private: Viola insists on finding connections between inner and outer land-

scapes. *Hatsu Yume* [First Dream] (1981) was filmed in Japan, *Chott El-Djerid* in the Tunisian Sahara and *The Passing* in the desert of the American south-west. All these works are in part meditations on the states - mental, physical and, by extension, spiritual - provoked by prolonged exposure to such spaces.

#### Aesthetic chasteness

Seeing *The Passing* recently I was struck by a comment a friend made about the experience: that it was ■ work she would "remember with my body". The way Viola's use of time makes the viewing experience physical, something to be felt, is a key feature of his work. While often visually ravishing, his tapes have systematically avoided the seductive special effects so readily available in video post-production, an aesthetic chasteness that reaches its apogee with the decision to shoot *The Passing* in black and white.

"The obscenity of colour can so easily be misused in places such as the American south-west - I mean all those colour photographic shots of red sandstone rocks against a deep blue sky. I had been to those places and I couldn't imagine going out there with a colour camera - especially a colour video camera, which has a kind of electronic colour that's less subtle than film. So it had to be black and white. The decision was compounded by the fact that I wanted to record a lot of it at night. I had special low-light cameras which were black and white, and there's not a lot of colour at night anyway.

"For me this medium has always been physical. The first time I used a video camera I signed it out of the university media centre and an hour later, I slipped and fell on it, crushing it into tiny pieces. It was a good way to start - I figured that if you could sit on it and break it, you shouldn't be afraid of it! But that kind of physical experience apart, I think cinema is a physical medium. Sitting in a darkened room hearing sound and watching movement and light is a very physical experience. Working with video, I found I started to connect intuitively with the body. And then when I began to work with installations, putting images in rooms and having the whole room be part of the piece, the physical presence of the viewer became part of the way the work functioned and I realised I had to study our bodies."

Viola has said that "video treats light like water", and certainly images of water recur throughout his works. In *The Passing* the central

image is of a man submerged, combining connotations of death by drowning with those of the pre-conscious state of amniotic suspension. A similar image stands at the centre of *The Nantes Triptych* installation (1992), flanked by those of a young woman giving birth and an old woman dying.

If Viola's work explores conventional water symbolism, it has equally employed it to formal ends. *The Reflecting Pool* (1977-79) takes the real-time image of a woodland pool and recreates its surface as a second screen within the monitor. Viola stands beside the pool, leaps, and is frozen in mid-air. Over time his frozen figure vanishes, but this erasure remains invisible in the pool's surface, which reflects another time, another perceptual experience. *Hatsu Yume* approaches water as a refracting, rather than reflecting, medium. The lights of a Tokyo street are filtered through the rain on a car wind-screen. Extreme close-ups from macro-lens cameras document, in the everyday occurrence of a city rainstorm, a kaleidoscope of abstract patterns and sumptuous colour.

"I've always been drawn to water. I had a near-death experience when I was about ten years old - I fell into the water and almost drowned. I remember clearly that I wasn't frightened at all - it was a beautiful experience: the deep, blue-green colour and the little plants waving on the bottom of the lake bed and a few fish. It was fascinating, then this big arm came down and abruptly pulled me out of that incredible world. Then I started to cry.

"I've been interested for the last 20 years in the work of a Sufi writer and artist from thirteenth-century Persia called Rumi. In one of his works he describes us as being like bowls floating on the surface of a great ocean. As we go through life, the bowl slowly fills up with water, and when the water reaches the top the water within merges with the water outside and we don't need the bowl any more, it slips slowly away beneath the surface. It's a very beautiful image."

#### The undersound

Viola opted out of art classes to work with video while a student at Syracuse University in the 70s. At this time he was also involved in experiments with sound and electronic music. The investigation into the relation of sound and image has been an enduring feature of his work. Relying rarely on the spoken word or

# FEELINGS ALONG THE BODY

Video artist Bill Viola uses the electronic screen to explore inner landscapes. Chris Darke talks to him about his mystical faith in the image



music, the sound on Viola's tapes conveys the sense of a perceptual field that completes the viewer's experience of the image rather than simply illustrating it. As Gene Youngblood has put it, it is "a kind of *musique concrète* which suggests that time has a sound".

"Sound gave me another one of my models. Vision is very selective and focused, whereas sound exists all around you; it is much more diffuse. It is analogous to a perceptual field, or field of being, which in essence is what we are. We're centred in our bodies, but our bodies are extended out through our memories, our past associations and the places we've been.

"This idea of the human being as a perceptual field gave me a way to approach images that helped me to get beyond the image's seductive power. The camera is a very misleading

device because all you have to do is press the red record button and you generate an image. This image is complex and realistic, based on what you know to be there when you're shooting. It's coloured, there's sound in it, and you can think, 'Hey, that's pretty amazing! I did that!' Of course, that's just the first stages, similar to a child making a simple line on a piece of paper – you have to go beyond that. All the movies you've ever seen and all the television you've ever watched is in there when you pick up that camera.

"When I started working with a video camera, it was sound that informed the way I moved it. The way the camera moves in my 1976 piece, *The Space Between the Teeth*, shooting down the hallway at high speed through a series of fast cuts, came directly from thinking

about sound. When I was setting up for that piece I was palpably experiencing the sound-waves going down that hallway: I could feel them travel down the hallway, bounce off the back and come back again. I wanted to move my camera that way – it was an idea that came from an acoustical approach, not a visual one: what would it look like to be on the crest of that soundwave, riding it down the hall?

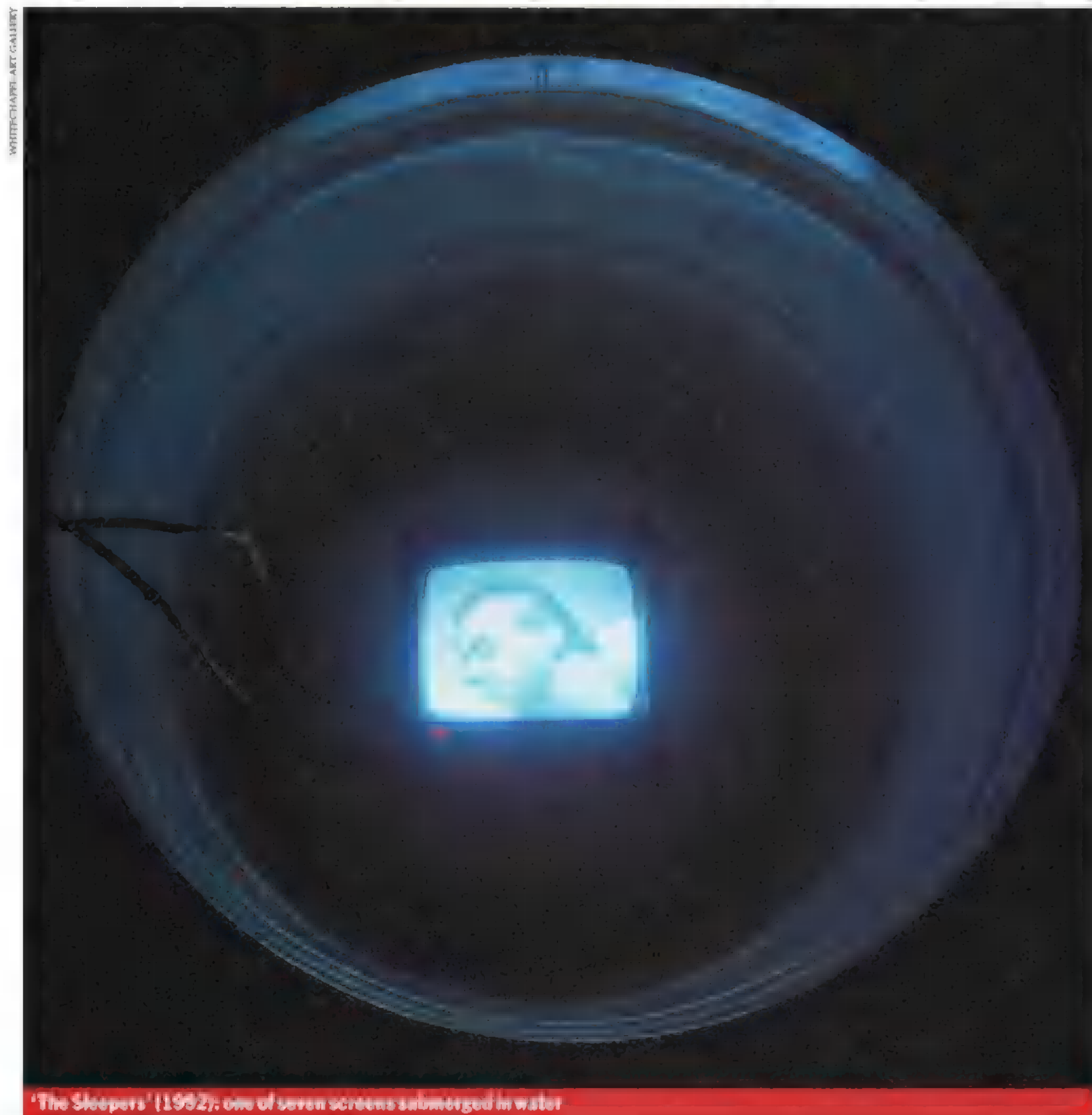
"That, plus the idea of the 'undersound', gave me an important way to approach the image. I interpret what I call the 'undersound' in my work as a deep rumble, the sound of wind, of heavy machinery, a continual sound that I think of as being in the basement of our lives. One of the reasons I feel so comfortable about working with video is the fact that a video camera is a magnetic tape recorder: it is electro-magnetic and is based on the audio tape recorder, as opposed to film, which is based on emulsion on acetate. In film, sound is an add-on, a physically separate system; with video, the sound is recorded on the tape with the image and the image is integral to the sound. Of course, that's also the case with the human body: we don't, unless we're unfortunately handicapped, get images without sound."

#### In the eye of the image storm

It could be said that Viola uses video against the grain. In the storm of images that today incorporates both MTV and surveillance technology, his video work occupies a privileged place – in the eye of the storm, if you like. It is a space where a decelerated, more meditative use of video takes place.

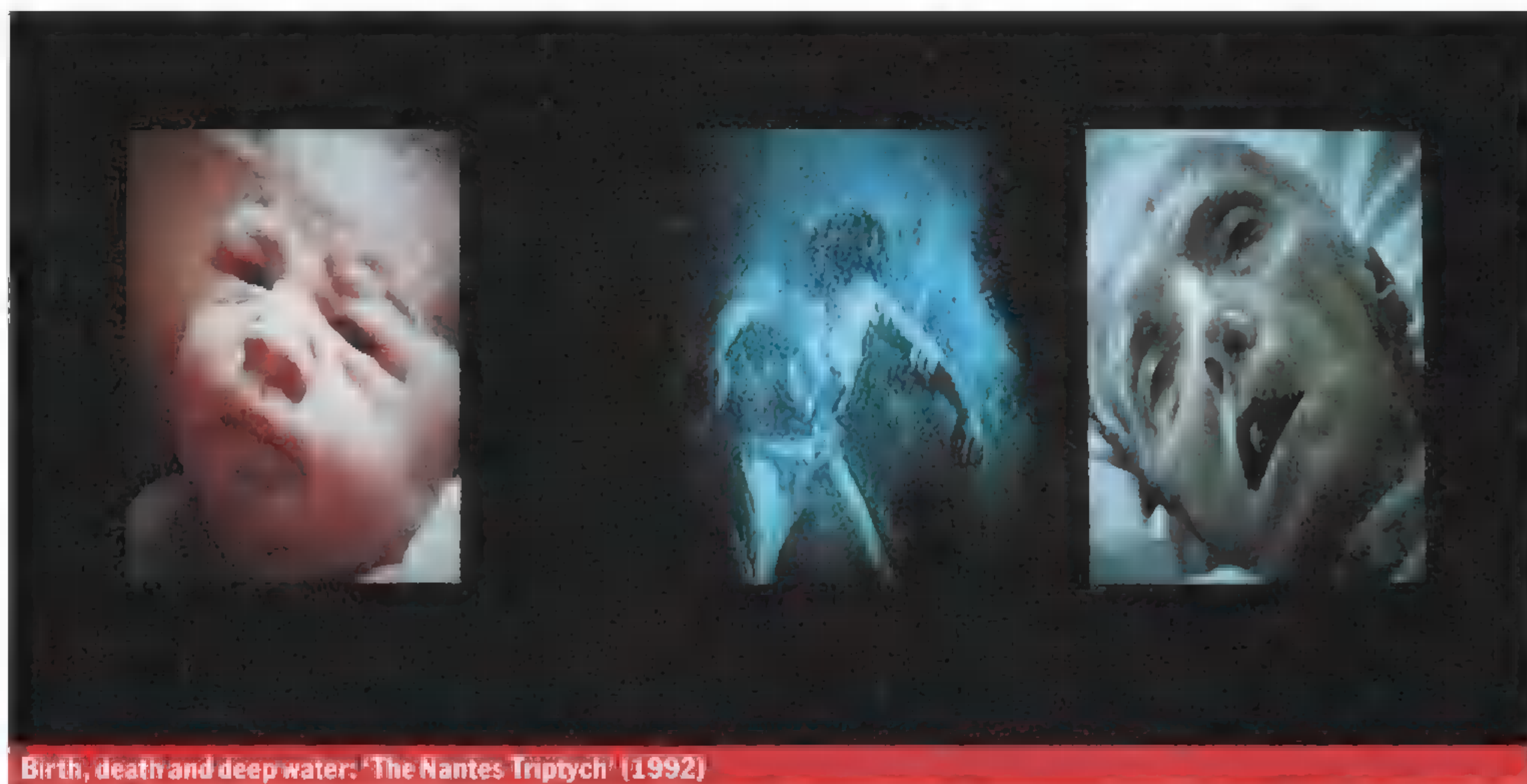
"When I was younger I tended to react more viscerally and adversarially to things. The video equipment I was using defined itself in opposition to the larger culture and the powers that be, which we were all fighting against and trying to reform. Video was an important part of the counter-culture movement of the late 60s.

"*The Space Between the Teeth* was the first time I worked with computer editing systems where I could address an individual frame and cut on it. There was a series of fast, montage-like cuts in the tape, and when I showed it I remember that some of the video community, particularly the video purists, criticised it because they thought that this was a film technique; video didn't do that. Then, years later, MTV came along and suddenly everybody is cutting like that; it has now become a video technique. ►



'The Sleepers' (1982): one of seven screens submerged in water





Birth, death and deep water: 'The Nantes Triptych' (1992)

◀ One of the things that's fascinating about working in this medium for 20 years is that what I'm working with now is not the same as when I started. It's a medium in transition and it looks as though it will continue to transform itself in the future.

"I think that the idea of slowing things down came from my personal experiences, from visiting the desert when I was living in New York and experiencing how not only the visual environment changes, but how time changes as well. When a car is coming at you at 50 miles an hour on a city street, it is travelling very fast; it whizzes by you in a second. But if you stand out in the expanse of a dried saltlake in Death Valley and watch a car coming at you at 50 miles an hour when you can see 70 miles clear straight ahead, the car is going to take over an hour to get to you. Time is modified by different places."

#### Video in the gallery

Art and technology converge in video art. In Viola's work, this meeting is made particularly interesting through the attempt to reconcile formal aspects of the western high-art tradition with high-tech modernity, as in the triptych framing device of *The Nantes Triptych*. But far from being post-modern parody or avant-garde gesture, the hybrid, multi-media and transcultural nature of Viola's work testifies to the artist's own re-readings of art history and to the questions posed about the nature of the relationship between the artist working in mass-media technology and the spectator.

"I belong to a generation that stands possibly at the end of a 150-year-old model of art-making which was evolved in France and which we call the 'avant-garde'. The avant-garde – originally the idea of breaking with the academy and neo-classical art; the emphasis on individual vision and creative genius; opposition to a bourgeois mentality and to the establishment in art – was an adversarial role. I think that now we're seeing the later stages of that model being played out, and in these stages we're seeing some of the problems that arise, one of which is the isolation of artists from the community they're working in.

"We have this thing called the 'art world', which has a very rarefied atmosphere, much like academia, and which stands in isolation from the community at large. Artists of my gen-

eration who have picked up one of the dominant tools of communication – television – and attempted to make art with it have taken a radical step which we haven't seen since the Renaissance or possibly the Baroque period. In 1975, my first work to be broadcast on television was seen by half a million people. That creates an incredible opportunity. I don't know if I can use the word 'responsibility', but it certainly necessitates a contact with people that is going to bring into focus all the issues of the avant-garde position.

"After I made my peace with art history, having had it ruined for me at art school and then studying it on my own later, I saw the connections from the point of view of the artist, which is what they don't teach you. They teach you art history from the point of view of the scholars and researchers, from an external spectator, educated observer point of view. I came in through the back door when I started to develop my own artistic practice and started to realise what it means to be an artist, to be doing this work. I think what drove me was the realisation that, to take the example of the triptych, the form of the triptych is not only a form in art history and therefore a familiar form to the western eye in particular, but is also part of the structure of consciousness. The tripartite structure of the universe is a basic element in the Christian tradition – earth, heaven and hell. When one works with that form, besides making connections with the specific form of the triptych altarpiece, one is also working with a latent structure of consciousness."

#### The wind in the leaves of a tree

Georges Méliès saw cinema as an art form that was capable of recording images hitherto undocumented, such as the wind in the leaves of a tree. In its insistence on perceptual duration and its attentiveness to landscape and the possibilities for abstraction in the play of light on water and land, Viola's work might be seen as having developed precisely what Méliès identified as cinema's first vocation. Because of its narrative imperative, cinema has largely relinquished this idea. Has video, in the work of an artist like Viola, taken it up?

"I think cinema is capable of producing this kind of image, and even in banal Hollywood movies, if you can detach yourself from the dramatic storyline, you have moments –

through a cut or a camera angle or a point of view – of this other side of cinema. It's fascinating to see how this visual emphasis, which was strongly evident in the work of the early filmmakers – Méliès, Vertov and so on – has played itself out along literary-dramatic lines. All that reviews of movies talk about today is storyline – so-and-so meets so-and-so and then they get divorced. They don't talk about light and image and sound any more.

"Obviously approaching this as an artist, and being influenced by the work of the American avant-garde of the 60s – Stan Brakhage, Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits – made me realise that you could do things with this medium other than what I was seeing on television, which in my childhood included a lot of old movies. A camera, as blunt and passive a device as it is, basically records the light that comes into it in a mechanical way. But when you turn that instrument on and the wind blows through the grass, what you capture is more than just a visual image. If you lay the film strip out in front of you, you see a series of still shots of grass. But when you project it, all of a sudden these blades of grass are moving! I still share an almost medieval fascination with the magic of these things.

"I think the narrative imperative has modified the agenda of working with the moving image; there's a gravitational pull that the force of the story exerts. At the close of the twentieth century, with things like MTV and the most different departure from this traditional narrative line, the television commercial, forms are beginning to open up to the point where if we jump ahead a hundred years, I think we'll look back at many of the things done in this century as being primitive in much the same way as we look on medieval painting that didn't use Brunelleschi's system of perspective as being childlike."

#### Faith in the image

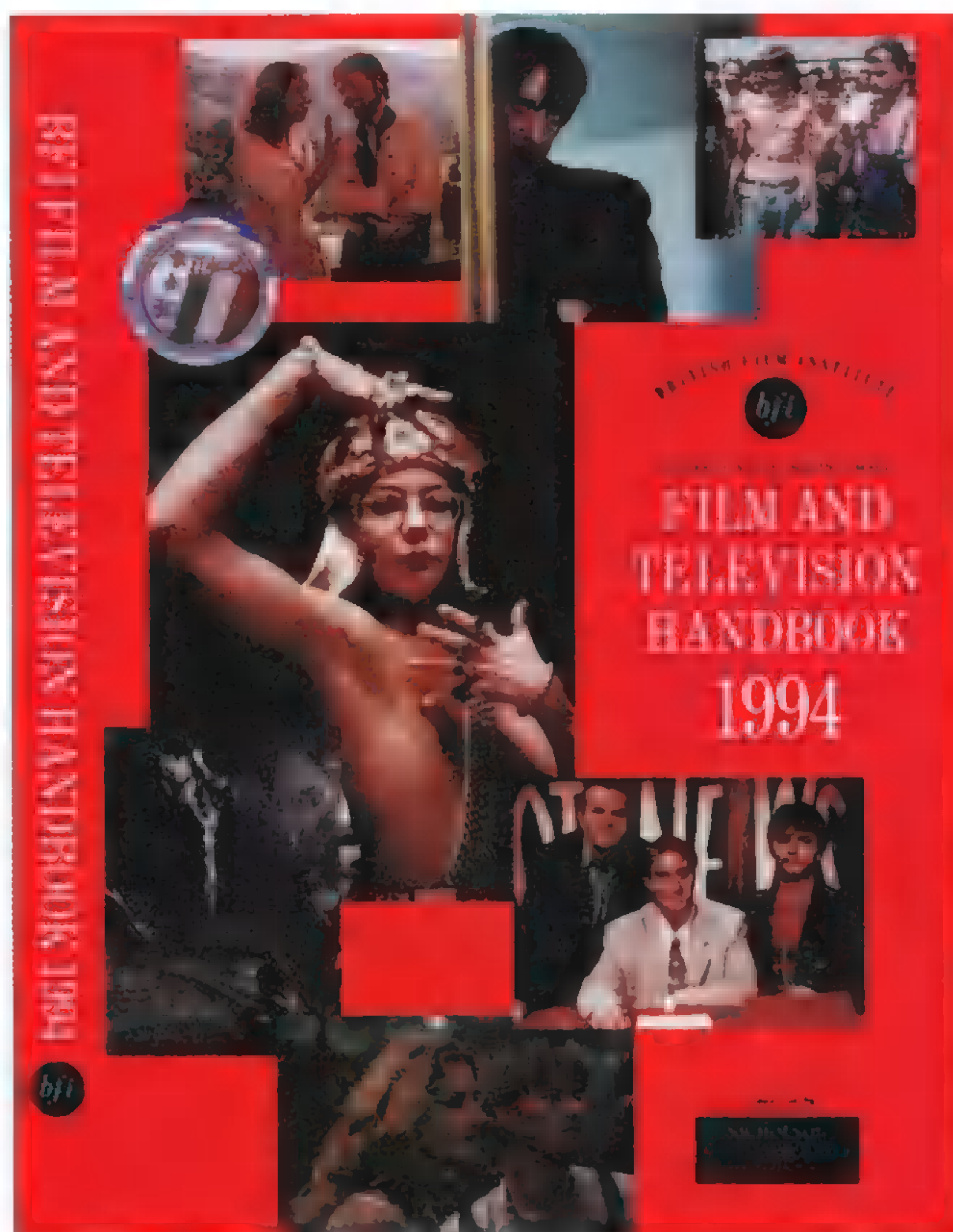
André Bazin identified two types of film director – those with "a faith in reality" and those with "a faith in the image". It may appear paradoxical in the age of video, where image and reality are collapsed in the idea of the simulacrum, that Viola implicitly revives a kind of Bazinism. His "faith" is close to that of Bazin in attributing to the image an ontological status that has been fatally compromised.

"I've never lost my faith in the image. To take an example: there are thousands of images of the Grand Canyon. Within this phenomenon that a lot of current theorists are fascinated by – this rush of banal images – the image of the Grand Canyon has taken on its own life. But when you're standing at the edge of the canyon, whether you've seen a million photographs or you've seen one, it doesn't matter. There's this incredible presence that wipes away all the clichés and you begin to see the real thing beneath the pale reflections we are trying to capture."

*I would like to thank Steven Bode and Emily Grant at Film and Video Umbrella, Saho Matsumoto and Bill Viola and Kira Perov.*

*'Unseen Images' is at the Whitechapel Art Gallery from 17 December to 13 February*





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COMPILED BY CHRIS WAGSTAFF

"Our cinema is guilty of being 'in the Italian style', of never being something industrial and commercial, but rather the cunning trafficking of people trying to get rich... However, it has one merit: that of never thinking the industry was something that was ours. It was like our once wanting to compete with American cigarettes. So we have always resigned ourselves to a well-deserved inferiority complex." (Fellini in interview.)

"Tonino, have you noticed how we are building aeroplanes and there are no longer any airports?" (Fellini to the scriptwriter Tonino Guerra, 1992.)

Fellini is thought of as the Artist, the great Author of cinema, founder, with *La dolce vita*, of Art Cinema. Obituaries in British newspapers mourned his death in words with capital letters, attesting to a notion that his films, and the Italian cinema of which they were a part, were ahistorical attributes of some individual, unexplainable Greatness. Obituaries in the Italian press were very different. The British memorials constructed a monument bearing a name, noting how often 'Fellini' figures in the title of his films, and acknowledging the adjective 'Felliniesque' as part of our vocabulary, carrying connotations of baroque, self-indulgent and often solipsistic fantasy. They wondered at the invention of the films up to 8½ and passed more swiftly over the later ones, allowing the notions of autobiography, originality and a private world of the imagination to explain them in terms of a European art cinema.

Italians remembered the human being, his kindness, his weaknesses, his opinions and the evolution of his personality over a lifetime. If, for the British, Fellini stood for an artistic imagination, a manifestation of the aesthetic, for Italians he stood for love and tenderness, followed by fear, disillusion and horror at the world before him. They saw him in terms of feeling – as the novelist Antonio Tabucchi said, "he lived alongside us, telling our story, from the Reconstruction to the uncertainties of our Economic Miracles."

To know Fellini's cinema is to know where he came from. He arrived in Rome from Rimini in 1939 to start making a living drawing caricatures for patrons of cafés, cartoons and gags for satirical magazines, and sketches for the live variety acts that preceded the feature film in cinemas of that time. Soon he was contributing to film scripts;

in 1939 and 1940 he was an uncredited writer, together with Metz, Marchesi and Steno, on four of Mario Mattoli's comedies. This was not a lone, pioneering start to a career; he was joining an artisan army. Films were written in *trattorie* (Cesaretto's, or the Menghi Brothers') by groups of like-minded friends, together with the producer and the director, and this continued after the war. At neighbouring tables, ever-changing groups would be light-heartedly throwing together ideas for a neo-realist denunciation of poverty, a comedy vehicle for Totò, a nineteenth-century heroic adventure tale, or a tear-jerking melodrama. The promiscuity of creation was mirrored by the promiscuity of distribution: there was no great divide between art and commercial cinema, and at the heart of Italian film-making lay ideas that had popped up, maybe, during a session writing gags for the humorous paper *Marc'Aurelio*, or for a satirical radio broadcast. Fellini and his friend and collaborator Tullio Pinelli disguised themselves as vagabonds to collect material from the Tombolo area of Livorno on prostitutes, pimps and their black American clients for Lattuada's *Senza pietà*; Pinelli encountered in the Appenines an itinerant entertainer pulling his cart up a slope helped by his girl assistant.

As the 50s progressed, Italian comedy developed a clearer genre identity, moving away from the ironical, imaginative reflection of a common human experience into a more stereotyped world of 'cinematic' representation. Export markets permitted a rapid expansion of production, which then began to wrest the home market from American films. The roles of those involved in making films became more professionally categorised, and the number of credited scriptwriters on each film began to fall. Even so, *La dolce vita* and 8½ were far more 'written' than the history books have allowed, and by now Fellini's eating companions were Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano and Brunello Rondi, with Angelo Rizzoli, the producer, looking on with fascination and some trepidation.

In 1956 the Italian director Mario Monicelli, generalising about the difference between films the public liked and films critics liked, said that the former "told a story", while the latter "illustrated a situation". Since the Second World War, the rejection of the centrality of narrative in film by a certain sector of Italian cinema has led to the work of directors such as De Sica, Rossellini, Visconti, Antonioni and Pasolini being assimilated to other arts, such as photography, poetry, music and painting. The characteristic sequence in a Fellini film has a procession of characters presented to the viewer as in a circus, or a fairground, or, most tellingly, a series of cartoon drawings – the procession being cinema's way of achieving that static 'illustration' of a type or situation for the viewer's amusement or amazement.

It was the scriptwriter Cesare Zavattini who said that once producers and directors stopped travelling on buses, Italian cinema ran out of ideas. But it was an export market phenomenon that reached into the minestrone of the Italian film industry and extracted some of its ingredients as art cinema, making gourmet dishes of what was traditional cooking. This is not to reduce Fellini, but to understand him and the world that gave him to us.

## Films directed by Fellini

1950

**Luci del varietà (Lights of Variety)**

Co-director: Alberto Lattuada

Producers: Federico Fellini, Alberto Lattuada (Capitolium Film)

Screenplay: Alberto Lattuada, Federico Fellini,

Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano

Photography: Otello Martelli

Music: Felice Lattuada

Design: Aldo Buzzi

Editor: Mario Bonotti

Lead Actors: Peppino De Filippo, Carla Del Poggio, Giulietta Masina

This relentless and humorous chronicle of the fortunes of a fading variety artist who betrays his lover and his troupe for the attractions of a beautiful, talentless girl cynically on the make nevertheless retains a passionate tenderness towards the world in which Fellini learned his profession.

1952

**Lo sceicco bianco (The White Sheik)**

Producer: Luigi Rovere (PDC-OFI)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano

Photography: Arturo Gallea

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Raffaele Tolfo

Editor: Rolando Benedetti

Lead Actors: Brunella Bovo, Leopoldo Trieste, Alberto Sordi, Giulietta Masina

A classic Italian comedy of situation and character, in which the outward appearance of respectability and contentedness of a newly-wed couple is demolished by the dreams and aspirations of the wife. This allows Fellini lovingly to satirise the chasm that separates reality and desire, without avoiding the pain involved, and to record on film the world of the photographed cartoon strip adventure and romance that has always been so much a part of Italian popular culture. Now celebrated, it was ignored when first presented at Venice.

1953

**I vitelloni**

(*Spivs, The Young and the Passionate*)

Producer: Lorenzo Pegoraro (Peg Film, Rome, Cité Film, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano

Photography: Otello Martelli

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Mario Chiari

Editor: Rolando Benedetti

Lead Actors: Franco Interlenghi, Franco Fabrizi, Alberto Sordi, Leopoldo Trieste, Riccardo Fellini, Leonora Ruffo, Lida Baarova  
I vitelloni recounts the aimless lives of five youths in Fellini's home town of Rimini, this time viewing more severely their inability to come to terms with reality and responsibility, and their consequent shallowness. The balance of critique and compassionate tenderness in Fellini's treatment of the world he depicts earned the film immediate and unanimous respect. He was later to separate out the elements of the blend.  
**Un'agenzia matrimoniale (A Marriage Agency), fourth episode of Amore in città**

Producers: Cesare Zavattini, Riccardo Ghione, Marco Ferreri (Faro Film)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli

Photography: Gianni Di Venanzo



Music: Mario Nascimbene

Design: Gianni Polidori

Editor: Eraldo Da Roma

Lead Actors: Antonio Cifariello,  
Livia Venturoli

Cesare Zavattini was aiming for cinematic journalism, stories taken from reality. Fellini viciously subverts the genre, showing how the search for the truth about a gentle innocent girl on the part of a reporter is a cruel exploitation of her feelings.

**1954**

#### **La strada**

Producers: Dino De Laurentiis, Carlo Ponti  
(Produzione Ponti-De Laurentiis)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano

Photography: Otello Martelli

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Mario Ravasco

Editor: Leo Catozzo

Lead Actors: Giulietta Masina,  
Anthony Quinn, Richard Basehart  
A character endowed with divine grace, candid and angelic, is pushed up against the most cruel and insensitive reality Fellini can depict. But her suffering serves to redeem the man who brutalises her. This situation has been developing in all Fellini's films up to now. In *La strada* it is pared down to its essentials and illustrated through a wealth of subtly deployed Christian, pagan and popular iconography. This is the first film fully to display the power and lyricism of Fellini's vision, but it paradoxically does so with the basest and most elemental means, leading to its being considered as on the outer fringe of neo-realism.

**1955**

#### **Il bidone (The Swindle)**

Production: Titanus (Rome), SGC (Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano

Photography: Otello Martelli

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Dario Cecchi

Editors: Mario Serandrei, Giuseppe Vari

Lead Actors: Broderick Crawford, Richard  
Basehart, Franco Fabrizi, Giulietta Masina,  
Lorella De Luca

A small-time con man's shallow opportunism leads to his eventual abandonment by all around him to a solitary death. But this man lives through a gradually intensifying hell of remorse all the while. Here the figurations of outward corruption and inner spiritual grace are held in a single character and left unresolved, perfectly embodying that blend of compassion and condemnation, with the possibility of redemption, that characterises this phase of Fellini's output.

**1957**

#### **Le notti di Cabiria (The Nights of Cabiria)**

Producer: Dino De Laurentiis (Dino De  
Laurentiis, Rome, Les Films Marceau, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano, Pier Paolo Pasolini (dialogues)

Photography: Aldo Tonti, Otello Martelli

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Piero Gherardi

Editor: Leo Catozzo

Lead Actors: Giulietta Masina,  
Amedeo Nazzari

Cabiria is a resourceful, unrepentant prostitute who yearns nevertheless for



**La strada (1954)**

love. But her desires and dreams are continually exploited and crushed by a cruel reality, as has become the rule in Fellini's films of the 50s. As in *La strada*, Giulietta Masina embodies an irrepressible vitality and a spiritual purity which nothing can destroy. *Le notti di Cabiria* concludes a trilogy of films of redemption which use characters at the lowest level of society to express a spiritual vision of inner humanity which is never explicitly Christian, but which leaves that interpretation very much open.

**1960**

#### **La dolce vita**

Producer: Giuseppe Amato (Riama Film,  
Rome, Pathé Consortium Cinéma, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi

Photography: Otello Martelli

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Piero Gherardi

Editor: Leo Catozzo

Lead Actors: Marcello Mastroianni,  
Anouk Aimée, Anita Ekberg, Lex Barker,  
Yvonne Furneaux

Disillusion comes to the fore in an infernal journey through the Roman high-life on the Via Veneto. Neither art, nor culture, sex nor religion can bestow a meaning on life. An alternative to comic strips in popular reading were the weekly gossip magazines, illustrated with photographs taken by paparazzi, which recounted the scandalous lives of celebrities in a Rome that had become a substitute Hollywood. The characters in *La dolce vita* are bourgeois, and represent a critique and burlesquing of the Italian cultured and ruling class; the structure of the film borrows from these gossip magazines (as well as from Dante's *Inferno*). The emptiness and corruption of the characters' lives are thrown into relief by images of purity and innocence; and yet the cast is endowed with enormous vitality by what Pasolini called Fellini's "indiscriminate and indifferent love". Hitherto Fellini's narratives had been episodic; now they abandon narrative for a fresco of spectacle filmed with a freedom that astonished the public.

**1962**

#### **Le tentazioni del dottor Antonio**

(The Temptations of Doctor Antonio),  
second episode in Boccaccio '70

Producer: Carlo Ponti (Concordia Compagnia  
Cinematografica and Cineriz, Rome,  
Francinex and Gray Films, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi,

Goffredo Pariser

Photography: Otello Martelli

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Piero Zuffi

Editor: Leo Catozzo

Lead Actors: Peppino De Filippo, Anita Ekberg

Fellini had to make this film in colour because the other episodes were in colour, but it is later, with *Giulietta degli spiriti*, that he explores its possibilities. Here he responds to outrage at the sexual content of *La dolce vita* with a little treatise on the impossibility of repressing sexual desire: a man loses his mask of respectability and literally goes mad as his repressed libido is stimulated by a billboard advertising milk with the image of the sensuous Anita Ekberg. The billboard has speakers and broadcasts a jingle, it is shaped exactly like a cinemascope screen, and Ekberg moves, climbs down, holds the puny Antonio in a King Kong allusion, and eventually strips in exasperation, all of which is commented on for the viewer by a little Eros figure. Fellini is clearly and wittily relating repressed sexual desire to the cinematic experience.

**1963**

#### **8½ (Otto e mezzo, 8 e ½, 8½)**

Producers: Angelo Rizzoli, Federico Fellini  
(Cineriz, Rome, Francinex, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi

Photography: Gianni Di Venanzo

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Piero Gherardi

Editor: Leo Catozzo

Lead Actors: Marcello Mastroianni, Anouk  
Aimée, Sandra Milo, Claudia Cardinale,  
Rossella Falk

Few films have been as complex as 8½,

yet it avoids obscurity – a phenomenal achievement in a film which is justly regarded as Fellini's masterpiece. Beneath an apparent confusion of reality and fantasy, Fellini weaves a tight and very ordered web of cinematic self-reflexivity, dovetailing accounts of a film the protagonist cannot make with the film he does make, as well as with the film Fellini makes. Jungian psychoanalysis provides Fellini with a scheme for relating memories, dreams and fantasies to the unconscious feelings that animate Guido in his search for an acceptance of the apparently conflicting feelings which paralyse him and which, once accepted, constitute his life and his film. The whole operation is acidly belittled by an omnipresent critic. What made this film so influential on other film-makers is the richness with which autobiography and film-making itself are transformed into cinematic spectacle.

**1965**

#### **Giulietta degli spiriti (Juliet of the Spirits)**

Producer: Angelo Rizzoli (Federiz, Rome,  
Francoriz, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli,  
Ennio Flaiano, Brunello Rondi

Photography: Gianni Di Venanzo

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Piero Gherardi

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Giulietta Masina, Mario Pisu,  
Sandra Milo, Lou Gilbert, Caterina Boratto,  
Luisa Della Noce, Sylva Koscina,  
Valentina Cortese

This tender film is a rendering into the female of the same crisis 8½ represented in the male. The departure of Giulietta's husband precipitates a process of confrontation with her past, her fears and her fantasies, which enables her to achieve strength and independence as an individual. A far simpler film, structurally, than 8½, it uses colour



**8½ (1963)**



◀ seriously for the first time and makes remarkable use of caricatural types and dream situations to represent a psychic landscape. This is taken further in *Satyricon*.

**1967**

**Toby Dammit, third episode of *Tre passi nel delirio* (*Spirits of the Dead*) (aka *Histoires extraordinaires/Tales of Mystery*)**

Producer: Alberto Grimaldi, Raymond Eger (PEA Cinematografica Rome, Les Films Marceau/Cocinor, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi (from a story by Edgar Allan Poe)

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Piero Tosi

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Terence Stamp, Salvo Randone  
Fellini, at a low point in his life, uses the Poe tale 'Never Bet the Devil Your Head: A Tale with a Moral' as a pretext for a deeply pessimistic portrayal of artistic sterility and despair, together with a searing denunciation of current Italian cinema. A drunken, washed-out English Shakespearean actor arrives in Rome to act in an absurdly pretentious 'Catholic' Spaghetti Western, and kills himself by driving his Ferrari into an abyss.

**1969**

**Fellini: A Director's Notebook (Block-notes di un regista)**

Producer: Peter Goldfarb (NBC, US)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi

Photography: Pasquale De Santis

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Federico Fellini

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Federico Fellini, Giulietta Masina, Marcello Mastroianni

For a US television documentary Fellini subverts the realism and objectivity of documentary (as he did Zavattini's cinema-journalism in *Un'agenzia matrimoniale*) to reassert his creativity after a failed project, populating modern Rome with ancient Romans, and beginning to shoot *Satyricon*.

**Fellini *Satyricon* (Fellini's *Satyricon*)**

Producer: Alberto Grimaldi (PEA, Rome, Les Productions Artistes Associés, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi (from Petronius)

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Danilo Donati

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Martin Potter, Hiram Keller, Max Born, Mario Romagnoli, Fanfulla, Gordon Mitchell, Alain Cuny, Lucia Bosé, Salvo Randone

Still in the crisis that produced *Toby Dammit*, Fellini used Petronius' fragmentary narrative as the basis for his own creation of a dreamlike representation of the search for psychic wholeness, but this time not autobiographical. In *Satyricon* he tried not so much to recreate a real historical period as to exploit the distance in time from the present, which gave him the freedom to represent objectively the 'otherness' of the unconscious. Nevertheless, his portrayal of the spiritual decadence of pre-Christian Rome is often seen as a metaphor for the directionlessness of his own age.



Roma (1972)

**1970**

**I clowns (The Clowns)**

Producers: Federico Fellini, Ugo Guerra, Elio Scardamaglia (RAI, Rome, ORTF, Paris, Bavaria Film, Munich)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi

Photography: Dario Di Palma

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Danilo Donati

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Federico Fellini, Liana Orfei, Anita Ekberg, clowns, the film crew

An immensely subtle and witty television documentary about the institution of the clown. *I clowns* recreates childhood memories of circus clowns and superimposes a theory of clowning (a repressive, authoritarian type contrasted with an exuberant, chaotic type) on everyday humanity. A history of clowning (which also parodies historical documentaries) then gives way to a fantasy recreation of the art form.

**1972**

**Roma (Fellini's Roma)**

Producer: Turi Vasile (Ultra Film, Rome, Les Productions Artistes Associés, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Danilo Donati

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Peter Gonzales, Fiona Florence, Pia De Doses, Federico Fellini, Gore Vidal, Anna Magnani, Marcello Mastroianni

Any attempt to understand by documentary investigation either ancient or modern Rome (for the male Fellini, the feminine city) ends in an impasse. The way to get to its heart is through memory (childhood lessons on ancient Rome, the recreation of a 30s music hall or of the daunting brothels of the period), through the caricatural exuberance of its inhabitants (a Trastevere festival), or through a fantastic vision of Catholic ritual (an ecclesiastical fashion show). The film ends with an amazingly rapid tourist whip around night-time Rome in the company of a motorcycle gang of latter-day 'Vandals'.

**1973**

**Amarcord**

Producer: Franco Cristaldi (FC Produzione,

Rome, PECE, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tonino Guerra

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Danilo Donati

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Bruno Zanin, Pupella Maggio, Armando Brancia, Ciccio Ingrassia, Magali Noël, Francesco Maselli

The rapid art of the caricaturist enables Fellini to create the entire population and its collective rituals in a provincial town in Romagna at the time of his adolescence. But he has said himself that it is the perpetual adolescence of Italians, ever shirking moral responsibility, incapable of growing out of childish sexual fantasies (in which the Church imprisons them), that constituted Fascism and its ridiculous posturings. *Amarcord* is a gloriously comic film that was the only one after 8½ to receive a wide public acceptance.

**1976**

**Il Casanova di Federico Fellini (Fellini's Casanova)**

Producer: Alberto Grimaldi (PEA)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi, Andrea Zanzotto (verses), Tonino Guerra (lyrics), Antonio Amurri (lyrics), Carl A. Walken (lyrics), Anthony Burgess (English dialogue), from Giacomo Casanova de Seingart's memoirs

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Danilo Donati, Federico Fellini

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actor: Donald Sutherland, Cicely Browne, Tina Aumont, Margareth Clementi, Olimpia Carlisi  
Fellini felt disgust for the "nothingness" of the character he had chosen to depict, and yet he uses Casanova to express the fear and awe of men before the creative mystery of the eternal feminine, sunk in the waters of the lagoon of Venice, or deep in the belly of a whale. His remarkable use of Donald Sutherland as a mechanical copulator winding down with old age fits beautifully with the characteristically studied artificiality of the sets.

**1978**

**Prova d'orchestra (Orchestra Rehearsal)**

Production: Daimo Cinematografica and RAI, Rome, Albatros Produktion, Munich

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Brunello Rondi

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Nino Rota

Design: Dante Ferretti

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Balduin Bass, David Mausell, Francesco Aluigi, Angelica Hansen

At a moment when Italian society seemed to Fellini to be disintegrating into anarchy and threatened by an authoritarian backlash, he made for television with great speed this comic parable of an orchestra which rebels against its authoritarian conductor and cannot, as a result, make music. A steel demolition ball destroying a wall of the auditorium shocks the players into unison, but soon the conductor is abusing the situation by becoming dictatorial. The implied accusation of political irresponsibility was given a conservative interpretation, and displeased nearly everyone.

**1980**

**La città delle donne (City of Women)**

Producer: Opera Film Produzione, Rome, Gaumont, Paris

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Bernardino Zapponi, Brunello Rondi

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Luis Bacalov

Design: Dante Ferretti

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Marcello Mastroianni, Anna Prucnal, Bernice Stegers, Ettore Manni  
Sexuality is one of Fellini's main themes. Because he works almost exclusively within his own mental universe (*Giulietta* is an exception), he creates female figures who embody the fantasies of Italian men of his generation and background (which they have acquired as often as not from the cinema). In *La città delle donne* Fellini mocks his male characters' incomprehension of any kind of femininity that is not a projection of their own fantasies and insecurities by having his alter ego protagonist dream of finding himself at a monstrous feminist convention.

**1983**

**E la nave va (And the Ship Sails On)**

Producer: Franco Cristaldi (Vides Produzione and RAI, Rome, Gaumont, Paris)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tonino Guerra, Andrea Zanzotto (opera lyrics)

Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Music: Gianfranco Plenizio

Design: Dante Ferretti

Editor: Ruggero Mastroianni

Lead Actors: Freddie Jones, Barbara Jefford, Janet Suzman, Victor Poletti

The ritualistic, aesthetic and emotional aspects of opera and the way it captures the imagination and heart of the spectator are used as a metaphor for cinema. These are favourably contrasted with contemporary society's obsession with facts, which inexplicably elude the journalist protagonist of this elegant film in which Fellini pursues his polemic on the shallowness and heartlessness of the modern world.

**1985**

**Ginger e Fred (Ginger & Fred)**

Producer: Alberto Grimaldi (PEA/RAI, Rome, Revcom Films, Les Films Ariane, FR3 Films, Paris, Stella Films, Anthea, Munich)

Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Tonino Guerra

Photography: Tonino Delli Colli



Music: Nicola Piovani  
Design: Dante Ferretti  
Editor: Nino Baragli, Ugo De Rossi, Ruggero Mastroianni  
Lead Actors: Giulietta Masina, Marcello Mastroianni, Franco Fabrizi  
This bitter satire on the parasitical nature of television, which lowers everything human to the level of the saleable, recalls with affection Fellini's artistic patrimony in variety theatre and cinema. The director sees his world of emotion and imagination being snuffed out by a detested reality that apes his art.

**1988**

**Intervista**

Producer: Ibrahim Moussa (Aljosho Productions, France, RAI-Uno, Rome)  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Gianfranco Angelucci  
Photography: Tonino Delli Colli  
Music: Nicola Piovani  
Design: Danilo Donati  
Editor: Nino Baragli  
Lead Actors: Sergio Rubini, Paola Liguori, Maurizio Mein, Nadia Ottaviani, Federico Fellini, Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg, members of the film crew  
This film about Fellini's own relationship with Cinecittà, his memories of working there in the past, and his present activity shooting an entirely non-existent film, uses a wealth of devices to drive home the point that the only reality for Fellini is that of his creative imagination, since everything is shown to be an illusion created by him.

**1990**

**La voce della luna (The Voice of the Moon)**

Producers: Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori (CG Group Tiger Cinematografica/RAI-Uno, Rome, Cinemax, France)  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ermanno Cavazzoni (from his novel 'Il poema dei lunatici')  
Photography: Tonino Delli Colli  
Music: Nicola Piovani  
Design: Dante Ferretti  
Editor: Nino Baragli  
Lead Actors: Roberto Benigni, Paolo Villaggio, Marisa Tomasi, Nadia Ottaviani, Angelo Orlando  
The mad and the simple are the only people sane enough to hear the whisperings of the soul, which are drowned out by the cacophony of modern life and the mass media. Fellini returns to his provincial homeland and its popular culture (using as actors two of Italy's most popular comics) to record this poetic and pessimistic plea for a quieter world in which true communication might be possible.

**Films on which Fellini did some direction**

**1942**

**Gli ultimi Tuareg (The Last Tuaregs)/ I cavalieri del deserto (The Riders of the Desert) (never released, possibly not even completed)**  
Directors: Gino Talamo, Osvaldo Valenti (but it is said that Fellini substituted for the director for some scenes)  
Production: ACI  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tito Silvio Mursino (pseudonym of Vittorio Mussolini), Osvaldo Valenti (from a novel by

Emilio Salgari)  
Lead Actors: Osvaldo Valenti, Luisa Ferida, Primo Carnera  
**1946**  
**Paisà (Paisà, Paisan)**  
Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Assistant Directors: Federico Fellini, Massimo Mida (Fellini directed a sequence in the Florentine episode)  
Producers: Roberto Rossellini (OFI), Rod Geiger  
Screenplay: Sergio Amidei, Klaus Mann, Victor Alfred Hayes, Marcello Pagliero, Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, Annalena Limentani (English dialogue), (Vasco Pratolini uncredited)  
Photography: Otello Martelli  
Music: Renzo Rossellini  
Editor: Eraldo Da Roma

**1951**

**Persiane chiuse (Drawn Shutters)**

Director: Luigi Comencini (the film was started by Gianni Puccini, and it is said that Fellini stood in before Comencini was brought in to replace Puccini)  
Producer: Luigi Rovere  
Screenplay: Massimo Mida, Gianni Puccini, Franco Solinas, Sergio Sollima (Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini uncredited)  
Photography: Arturo Gallea  
Music: Carlo Rustichelli  
Design: Luigi Ricci  
Editor: Rolando Benedetti  
Lead Actors: Massimo Girotti, Eleonora Rossi Drago, Giulietta Masina

**Films scripted by Fellini for other directors**

**1939**

**Imputato, alzatevi! (Defendant, On Your Feet!)**

Director: Mario Mattoli  
Screenplay: Vittorio Metz, Mario Mattoli, Bel Ami (pseudonym of Anacleto Francini) (Giovanni Guareschi, Marcello Marchesi, Vincenzo Rovi, Vito De Bellis, Benedetto Brancacci, Ugo Chiarelli, Carlo Manzoni, Massimo Simili, Stefano Vanzini [Steno], Federico Fellini uncredited)  
**Lo vedi come sei?! /Lo vedi come sei... (Do You See How You Are?)**  
Director: Mario Mattoli  
Screenplay: Vittorio Metz, Steno (pseudonym of Stefano Vanzini), Mario Mattoli (Federico Fellini uncredited)

**1940**

**Non me lo dire! (Don't Tell Me!)**

Director: Mario Mattoli  
Script: Vittorio Metz, Marcello Marchesi, Steno, Mario Mattoli (Federico Fellini uncredited)

**Il pirata sono io! (The Pirate Is Me)**

Director: Mario Mattoli  
Screenplay: Vittorio Metz, Marcello Marchesi, Steno, Mario Mattoli (Federico Fellini uncredited)

**1942**

**Gli ultimi Tuareg (The Last Tuaregs)/ I cavalieri del deserto (The Riders of the Desert) (never released, possibly not even completed)**  
Directors: Gino Talamo, Osvaldo Valenti  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tito Silvio Mursino (pseudonym of Vittorio Mussolini), Osvaldo Valenti (from a novel by Emilio Salgari)  
**Avanti c'è posto (There's Room Up Ahead)**  
Director: Mario Bonnard  
Screenplay: Aldo Fabrizi, Cesare Zavattini, Piero Tellini, Federico Fellini (credited as 'Federico')

**Documento Z3 (Document Z3)**

Director: Alfredo Guarini  
Screenplay: Sandro De Feo, Alfredo Guarini, Ercole Patti (Piero Tellini, Federico Fellini uncredited)

**1943**

**Quarta pagina (The Fourth Page)**

Director: Nicola Manzari  
Screenplay: Piero Tellini, Federico Fellini, Edoardo Anton, Ugo Betti, Nicola Manzari, Spiro Manzari, Giuseppe Marotta, Gianni Puccini, Steno, Cesare Zavattini (six episodes, each scripted by a different writer; a seventh episode was cut at the editing stage)  
**Campo de' fiori (Campo de' fiori Square)**  
Director: Mario Bonnard  
Screenplay: Aldo Fabrizi, Federico Fellini, Piero Tellini, Mario Bonnard

**L'ultima carrozzella (The Last Carriage)**

Director: Mario Mattoli  
Screenplay: Aldo Fabrizi, Federico Fellini

**Chi l'ha visto? (Who Has Seen Him?)**

**(released in 1945)**

Director: Goffredo Alessandrini  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Piero Tellini

**1944**

**Apparizione (Apparition)**

Director: Jean de Limur  
Screenplay: Piero Tellini, Lucio De Caro, Giuseppe Amato (Aldo De Benedetti, Federico Fellini uncredited)

**1945**

**Tutta la città canta (The Whole City ■ Singing)**

Director: Riccardo Freda  
Screenplay: Riccardo Freda, Vittorio Metz, Marcello Marchesi, Steno (Federico Fellini uncredited)

**Roma città aperta (Rome, Open City)**

Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Screenplay: Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini (Alberto Consiglio, Roberto Rossellini, Carlo Celeste Negarville uncredited)

**1946**

**Paisà (Paisà, Paisan)**

Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Screenplay: Sergio Amidei, Klaus Mann, Victor Alfred Hayes, Marcello Pagliero, Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, Annalena Limentani (English dialogue), (Vasco Pratolini uncredited)

**1947**

**Il delitto di Giovanni Episcopo (Flesh Will Surrender)**

Director: Alberto Lattuada  
Screenplay: Piero Tellini, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Aldo Fabrizi, Alberto Lattuada, Federico Fellini

**Il passatore (A Bullet for Stefano)**

Director: Duilio Coletti  
Screenplay: Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini, Duilio Coletti (Cesare Zavattini, Ugo Betti uncredited)

**1948**

**Senza pietà (Without Pity)**

Director: Alberto Lattuada  
Screenplay: Tullio Pinelli, Alberto Lattuada, Federico Fellini, Ettore Maria Margadonna

**Il miracolo (The Miracle), second part of Amore (The Ways of Love)**

Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Roberto Rossellini

**1949**

**Il mulino del Po (The Mill on the River)**

Director: Alberto Lattuada  
Screenplay: Riccardo Bacchelli, Mario Bonfantini, Luigi Comencini, Carlo Musso, Sergio Romano, Alberto Lattuada, Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini

**In nome della legge (In the Name of the Law)**

Director: Pietro Germi  
Screenplay: Pietro Germi, Giuseppe Mangione, Mario Monicelli, Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini

**1950**

**Francesco, giullare di Dio (The Flowers of Saint Francis)**

Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Screenplay: Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, with the assistance of Father Félix Morlion, Father Antonio Lisandrini (Brunello Rondi uncredited)

**Il cammino della speranza**

Director: Pietro Germi  
Screenplay: Pietro Germi, Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini

**1951**

**La città si difende**

Director: Pietro Germi  
Screenplay: Pietro Germi, Tullio Pinelli, Giuseppe Mangione, Federico Fellini, Luigi Comencini

**Persiane chiuse (Drawn Shutters)**

Director: Luigi Comencini  
Screenplay: Massimo Mida, Gianni Puccini, Franco Solinas, Sergio Sollima (Tullio Pinelli, Federico Fellini uncredited)

**1952**

**Europa '51 (Europe '51)**

Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Screenplay: Sandro De Feo, Roberto Rossellini, Mario Pannunzio, Ivo Perilli, Diego Fabbri, Antonio Pietrangeli, Brunello Rondi (Federico Fellini uncredited)

**Il brigante di Tacca del Lupo (The Bandit of Tacca del Lupo)**

Director: Pietro Germi  
Screenplay: Tullio Pinelli, Pietro Germi, Fausto Tozzi, Federico Fellini

**1958**

**Fortunella**

Director: Eduardo De Filippo  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano

**1979**

**Viaggio con Anita (A Journey with Anita, released in the US in 1981 as Lovers and Liars)**

Director: Mario Monicelli  
Screenplay: Tullio Pinelli (Federico Fellini uncredited)

**Film by another director in which Fellini appeared as actor**

**1948**

**Il miracolo (The Miracle), second part of Amore (The Ways of Love)**

Director: Roberto Rossellini  
Production: Tevere Film  
Screenplay: Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Roberto Rossellini  
Photography: Aldo Tonti  
Music: Renzo Rossellini  
Editor: Eraldo Da Roma  
Lead Actors: Anna Magnani, Federico Fellini

**Television commercials directed by Fellini**

**1984**

**Television commercial for Campari Soda**

Title: 'Oh, che bel paesaggio!'

**Television commercial for Barilla pasta**

**1992**

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# Hacked to bits

It may have been me, that growl of frustration near you in the dark. Certainly I seem to have been voicing my dissatisfaction with incomplete copies of films ever since I began to take cinemagoing seriously. Not that all the films I gave star ratings in my Letts Schoolboy's Diary deserved seriousness, but then I was a 15-year-old who wore winklepickers and collected Cliff Richard albums. I'd also known for years what the films were supposed to look like, because issues of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* were already browning in my bedroom. So who can blame my adolescent self for pursuing James Whale's *Frankenstein* through a series of decaying Merseyside cinemas in the hope that just one uncensored copy might turn up by mistake? By the time they vanished – the film for years, the cinemas for ever – an obsession with cuts had taken root in my mind for good.

Not that it was always necessary to be obsessive or even informed to spot that censors had been fiddling with the film. In those days more than now there was a tendency to leave a build-up intact even if the payoff was removed. So Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* became an array of bravura suspense scenes terminated by violent hiccups in the soundtrack music in case anyone had failed to notice visuals were missing (readers who want to see how bad things were can still hire this version on British video). Those cuts were worth a roar of disbelief, as was the British print of William Castle's *Mr Sardonicus*, which omitted two crucial images – the first shot of Sardonicus' face, and the sight of what made him that way. Presumably these were extreme cases of the British censor's principle that a film mustn't be allowed to show something shocking more than once.

Of course sometimes the censor takes a dislike to an entire film. Rumours of the excellence of Bava's *Black Sunday*, an unexpected Christmas treat shown at the NFT in 1960, made me eager to compare the reality with the images my imagination had conjured up – until I learned that our censor had decided so much would have to be cut that the film wouldn't be worth showing. (In quite a few cases that seems not to have deterred anyone.) Stills from the film haunted me until 1968, when I saw the famous pop-eyed, nail-marked Barbara Steele on a poster outside a Manchester cinema. *Revenge of the Vampire* was indeed the same film, but rather less than all of it, as I discovered when Barbara Steele greeted the nailing of a mask on to her face with no more than the beginning of a squeak that was strangled by the opening credits. Twenty years were to pass before the BBC rewarded the patience of the cognoscenti with the complete version, and I can only hope that my lifetime is long enough to let me see *The Magnificent Ambersons* restored.

Which reminds me that the enemy isn't always the censor. I remember ranting, when I was much younger and even more ignorant than now, at a manager because his ABC had shown Howard Hawks' *Red Line 7000* as a second feature shorn of nearly half an hour. That was the form in which it

**Horror writer Ramsey Campbell describes his fascination with the elusive scenes the slasher cut out**

reached the provinces, and John Frankheimer's *Seconds* fared little better, so that I emerged from that film wondering if I had imagined reading of a party scene in which Rock Hudson gradually realises he is surrounded by people with identities as false as his. Nor have attitudes – of distributors, I presume – improved. The version of *True Romance* shown to the provincial press is shorter by some violence and at least one complete scene than the original British press preview, and the version which opened to the public is shorter still.

My most enduring fantasy about such interference is that someone will run the full print by mistake, as happened when for several weeks a Liverpool cinema showed the uncensored American version of *Evil Dead* preceded by a mysterious British X certificate. I used to think that such incidents were common – that the second time I saw some of Corman's Poe adaptations, they contained bits the censor had snipped. Perhaps they did. I also believed that if you saw a film abroad it would contain the material which had been cut in Britain, which is why I dragged my wife-to-be and some friends to a midnight show of Terence Fisher's *Dracula* in Heidelberg, believing that it would contain a shot of the demise of Dracula which I'd seen only in *Famous Monsters*. Alas, not only did it lack this shot, but a projectionist had replaced several minutes of the final reel with some shots of cowboys on horseback.

My faith was shaken, but not my obsession. Years later I was to overcome a splitting headache and force myself to keep my eyes on Pasolini's *Salò*, showing in French in Greenwich Village, since it seemed unlikely I would see the thing again – not that I've had much desire to. Then came the video recorder, and I can't imagine any of my readers being surprised to learn that I'm a

sucker for director's cuts, though I saw more than enough of *The Lawnmower Man* at its first showing, thank you very much. I was delighted to be able to add to my shelves the longer version of *The Shining*, as apparently supplied to ITV by Kubrick himself, even if I still fantasise about owning a copy which includes the penultimate (and, from what I understand about it, eloquent) hospital scene. If only Kubrick would decide to let Britain once more see *A Clockwork Orange* as he originally meant it to be seen, rather than the blurry videos which are everywhere available!

My shelves also bear copies of Val Lewton's *The Body Snatcher*, with the finale that remains unseen in Britain, and *King Kong*, restored shots and all, except for the spiders in the abyss (a scene which I'm assured was once shown as an extract by William K. Everson at the Gothique Film Society). I was finally able to see the drowning scene in the James Whale *Frankenstein*, although I didn't realise I had it until I played the tape on which I'd recorded a late-night broadcast of the film. Then I learn that an even more restored print has appeared on MCA-Universal Home Video in America.

I slip it eagerly into my magic machine, eventually to be rewarded by an extra image of Karloff cowering away from Dwight Frye's blazing torch. But where is the sound of Colin Clive shouting "Now I know what it's like to be God" as the monster comes to life? I see him opening his mouth, when in every other copy I've watched he twitches across the screen at this point, and he does indeed start shouting. "In the name of God! Now I know what..." And then he mouths the rest to an accompaniment of thunder. Perhaps in another 20 years, or however long it takes, I'll be able to cross the complete version off my wants list and pursue something else.



Stitch-up: Boris Karloff in James Whale's *'Frankenstein'*

BFI STILLS, POSTERS AND DESIGNS



## Radical patriot

Michael Eaton

**The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader**

Edited by Kevin Jackson, Carcanet Press, £25, 320pp

On the cover of a recent paperback edition of *Decline and Fall* is a photograph of an etiolated chinless wonder framed in languid curls of smoke as he doubtless thinks high-brow thoughts: the epitome of the decadent 30s dilettante. The photograph is of Humphrey Jennings.

For Big Daddy John Grierson and his tough, macho, grubbily realist sons, Jennings was every inch a dilettante: over-educated, intellectually experimental, a painter, a poet, a surrealist and a mass observer. How could the attitude of this Cambridge graduate from a free-thinking arty-crafty background be anything other than patronising towards the Sheffield steel man, the Manchester cotton worker, the Welsh collier? How wrong Grierson and his clan were, and how tellingly their wilful misunderstanding of this supreme filmmaker exposes their own smugness. If proof beyond the films (a body of only about five hours of work) were required, it can be found over and over again in this useful volume which will be eagerly consumed by Jennings devotees.

What Kevin Jackson has done is to bring together the disparate writings of Jennings in a single volume, revealing the breadth of knowledge, openness and intellectual generosity of the man, and for this we must be grateful. But in structuring the book as he has, the implications of Jennings' emotional and, dare we say, spiritual growth (which is one of his greatest legacies) are inevitably blunted.

For Jackson has organised the writings thematically rather than chronologically. The first section deals with writings on film and, apart from some synopses and treatments, consists largely of a series of letters Jennings wrote throughout the war to his wife and children who had been evacuated to the US. Together these constitute a marvellous document of the working life of a film-maker in wartime Britain. This section is followed by 'Critical Writings', which begins with his articles, largely on poetry and the theatre for *Experiment* magazine, as well as occasional writings on Surrealism which have only previously been extracted in his daughter Mary-Lou's collection for BFI Publishing. Then we have the revelatory texts of his populist pre-war BBC radio broadcasts on poetry and science, never before, to my knowledge, collected. Finally there is a section of poetry, much of which is familiar to aficionados and which demonstrates not only the influence of French Surrealism but also its particular transformation in Jennings' hands into something far from continental and *recherché* but which feeds directly into the political and sociological project of Mass Observation.

In terms of scope, there is nothing to quibble with here, although the concentration on the word means that paintings and photographs are necessarily under-represented. But in terms of intellectual development, the book is not an easy read. If one were making a classic bio-pic of Humphrey Jennings, the first act would probably con-



BY STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (3)

sist of a set of impoverished false starts in the decade which saw the rise of European fascism. How is the young would-be artist able to situate himself in relation to the available responses to this horror? The epiphanal moment occurs in the travels through industrial Britain for *Spare Time*, leading to the second act apotheosis which is, of course, the war, during which Jennings learns to live with Stepney fire fighters and South Welsh miners – the vision of a glorious future is revealed in the ruins of the present. The tragic third act is a post-war world in which his realisations are betrayed and his vision marginalised, ending in the terrible, meaningless, fatal accident on the recce in Greece.

Five pages into this book we are already at war, and there are 130 pages still to go after we have read the moving final letter, written days before his death. It is understandable that such a strategy was adopted: most readers will presumably gravitate towards the writings on film, and to begin the volume with a graduate student's thoughts on theatre design would have been a turn-off. Yet one can't help thinking of how Jennings himself would have dealt with this problem – presumably as he dealt with the textual organisation of disparate material in *May the Twelfth*, 1937, the first Mass Observation publication.

For Jennings was above all a maker of montages, not only in his films, poems and paintings, but also in his intellect. In spite of the English education system, he insisted on bringing together art and science, industry and poetry. In spite of English cultural snobbery, he saw no necessary distinction between 'high' and 'low' art. In spite of the English class system, he knew the future lay in bringing together the intellectual and the manual worker.

The tragedy is that only in wartime, when the terms 'radical' and 'patriot' were,

for a brief moment, montaged together, could this cultural project be effected. One of the sadnesses revealed here is just what a great film *Family Portrait*, the rather flabby and self-satisfied Festival of Britain documentary which was his last picture, could have been had Jennings been allowed to explore the themes he presented in his treatment without the crass interference of an eternally suspicious Grierson and a terminal lack of finance. If only Jennings had been able to make a film version of his proposed book *Pandaemonium* – an epic examination of the interplay between art and science at the time of the coming of the machine.

Let's rip his picture off the cover of *Decline and Fall*. No one represents less the intellectually terrified, class-bound snobbery of Waugh's England.

## Score draws

Russell Lack

**Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia and Hollywood Film Music**

Caryl Flinn, Princeton University Press, £25 (hb), £9.95 (pb), 188pp

**Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film**

Kathryn Kalinak, University of Wisconsin Press, \$45.95 (hb), \$17.95 (pb), 239pp

The pleasure of film music lies in its accessibility, its power to evoke feelings over short pockets of film time. Yet it is primarily a navigational device which reinforces narrative storytelling. In commercial films, music functions as an associative shorthand designed to trigger a median response from an audience. To attempt to overthrow this function by playing music against the emotions offered up by the film breaks the dramatic moment. Over the last couple of

Blazing trails:  
Humphrey Jennings' 'Fires Were Started' reveals the vision of a glorious future in the ruins of the present, above right



decades, film music has held an uneasy position within film studies. While films have been reduced to texts by the dubious pleasures of semiotics, film music has continued to float free of any unifying theory. The problem is that to talk about music in terms of its meaning misses its transcendent quality. This has led to a tendency to emphasise film music's transcendental rather than functional aspects, with the result that it has been mystified rather than demystified.

Caryl Flinn's study examines the tension between recent theoretical analyses of film music and the institutionalised commercial practices of the industry. Her central concern is to overturn the notion of film music as an art form without any ideological content. Flinn asserts that the Hollywood studio products of the 30s and 40s (the so-called 'golden age' of film scoring) spawned a model for much subsequent composition. She sees the stability of Hollywood's musical outpourings during this period as the result of a highly mediated form of artistic control exercised by the studios. Eager to avoid paying music publishers copyright fees, studios were quick to enlist composers to produce copy-cat musical scores that retained the charm of nineteenth-century romantic symphonic suites without any of the usage costs. This served to cauterise any excesses of artistic flowering within music departments and created a highly standardised film-music model that ironically has been taken as a paragon by many musicologists. Musical romanticism proved a perfect tool for the studios' assaults upon the public's leisure time, since its juxtapositions of the grandiose and the intimate combined narrative flexibility with a highly reactionary nostalgia.

Flinn's is, in many passages, a fascinating book, argued with clarity and breadth. It marks an important shift in emphasis, in that its analysis embraces not simply music itself, but the ideological conditions under which it was produced. All this is much needed, yet *Strains of Utopia* is not as radical as it first appears. In focusing on a specific period, particularly one as conservative as the heyday of the Hollywood studio system, Flinn has chosen a soft target for her critical perspective. The more complex music narratives both of that period and of the rise of the American independents are neatly avoided, and film music theory once more remains several steps away from the more interesting examples of its practice. That Flinn should uncover examples of misogyny at the level of scene scoring (for instance, favouring a male character's musical leitmotif over that of a female character) does not come as a revelation in the context of the wider patterns of coercion, control and artifice that characterised Hollywood during this era.

*Setting the Score*, by contrast, combines basic musicology with sociology to provide a study of the music of Hollywood rather than of the industrial process that produced it. Kathryn Kalinak's colourful, anecdotal book puts forward the view that scoring conventions in Hollywood's golden age were designed above all to facilitate the easy co-habitation of narrative and background music. Kalinak compares the scores of several key films – including Arthur Korngold's *Captain Blood*, Max Steiner's *The Informer* and Bernard Hermann's *The Magnificent Amber-*

*sons* – with more modern symphonic scores such as John Williams' *The Empire Strikes Back* and Basil Poledouris' *RoboCop*.

Kalinak's analysis of a variety of ostensibly very different scores points up the structural similarities that have survived from the 30s to the present day. Although the specific details of arrangements have changed, a contemporary score such as that for *RoboCop* exhibits the same reliance on music to provide structural unity at low points in the narrative as did the score for *Captain Blood*.

Kalinak avoids overt allegiance to any one theoretical perspective, embracing the work of several recent commentators including Caryl Flinn. As such, *Settling the Score* perhaps works best as a textbook. Certainly it serves as a useful primer in the basic language of music, its text fairly peppered with musical terms printed in bold type. But in its heavy bias towards the Hollywood studio output of the 30s and 40s, it also risks alienating a student readership. The scores of *RoboCop* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, for instance, are described largely in terms of their similarity to an earlier, necessarily classical, model.

These are conservative times, possibly as conservative as the era these titles address. Film music was highly controlled and it still is – except that now instead of a single score we have carefully selected back catalogues of same-label artists exhumed from the vaults and packaged as instant pop nostalgia. Although film music studies is a younger and more impoverished academic branch than the wider category of film studies, it is already beginning to show alarming signs of critical orthodoxy. Hollywood practice in the 30s and 40s is no match for a body of theory whose aim is to expose the reactionary side of ideologies. Therefore one must hope that film music studies will move on quickly from this era and address itself instead to those more partisan endeavours that have characterised, for example, independent filmmaking, ever since.

## The sobs of Bob

Geoffrey Macnab

**Crying with Laughter**

Bob Monkhouse, Century, £15.99, 352pp

Bob Monkhouse first appeared on television back in the 40s, when "the small, hazy screens made watching a misery, like staring at a monochrome stamp in a fog." Now, almost 50 years later, he is enjoying an Indian summer as a games-show presenter. The longevity of his career is in itself a testament to some kind of genius, although what this genius consists of remains a mystery. Over the years, he has worked as a writer, an animator, a comedian and a film actor, easing his way across the various media without becoming especially identified with any one field. He has finally ended up where he started. As a TV personality, plain and simple.

"Oh, do shut up, you dreadful young fool," Gilbert Harding, the tweedy, bespectacled curmudgeon who bellowed and blustered his way into the nation's affections during the 50s, was wont to bark out at Bob when the two appeared together in *What's My Line*. The show had all but become Hard-

ing's fiefdom, and newcomer Monkhouse was given instructions to goad him – it made "better television" when Harding lost his temper on air. They make an odd couple: Monkhouse, smooth, unflappable, and Harding the reverse. But this latterday version of Prince Hal and Falstaff have more in common than you might suppose.

Both were rigidly typecast by the small screen, and the distinctions between their 'real' and their 'TV' personalities were blurred. If Harding, as critic Andy Medhurst has suggested, was defined for viewers by his "legendary rudeness", Monkhouse was condemned to be regarded as the last word in smarmy insincerity. Like Harding's famous, anguished appearance on *Face to Face*, Monkhouse's autobiography, following hot on the heels of his revelatory radio interview on *In the Psychiatrist's Chair*, seems an attempt at reaching for a certain gravitas which television denies him.

"Since I have spent my whole life trying to avoid confrontation with the unpleasant," Monkhouse explains in his foreword, "it may seem a bit out of character for me to do it now. Well, Catholics call it confession, psychiatrists call it catharsis, and I call it playing fair with the audience." There are painful details here about his relationship with his taciturn, sometimes violent father and his prudish mother, who shunned him. Given that an unhappy childhood and a share of misfortunes are the prerequisite for the 'authentic' comedian, Bob ought to be as real as they come, but he is continually let down by his penchant for the glib one-liner. He writes his prose as if it were designed to be delivered in front of a live audience at the London Palladium.

Where the book is at its best is in its depiction of the early years, when Monkhouse was starting to shimmy his way up the showbusiness ladder. He was from a middle-class background, educated, like Raymond Chandler and P. G. Wodehouse, at Dulwich College. The grandson of a jelly and custard magnate, he grew to be a tubby schoolboy and sought solace from the rigours of the classroom in cartoons and movies. Monkhouse is, above all else, a film buff: in the 60s he hosted a series called *Mad Movies* which showed clips of old Chaplin shorts and the Keystone Cops; he has been collecting films throughout his life and was once nearly sent to prison on a trumped-up charge of defrauding the distributors of the pictures he owned.

A teenage entrepreneur, he had already written "30 pulp novels" by the time he was 17; was a polished performer in local youth clubs and had started hanging around outside stage doors in the hope of hustling professional comedians into buying his jokes. One stand-up he'd been pestering rebuked him in a tart letter as "a very impudent and persistent little fellow", but he eventually managed to sell some jokes to Max Miller. When he joined the stand-up circuit, Miller was to take pity on him and give him a masterclass in "patter comedy". The monologues with which he opens his television shows today hark back, in both style and content, to the "cheeky chappie" persona, pale imitations though they may be of Miller at his best.

A requisite of showbiz memoirs is a fair smattering of gossip, and Monkhouse lays it on with a trowel. "What I hoped would be a nostalgic stroll down memory lane has ►

**Cheeky Monkhouse: how the archetypal TV personality shimmied his way up the showbusiness ladder**





◀ too often turned out to be a miasmic grope through long-closed corridors," he observes near the start of the book, presumably referring to painful childhood memories which he is forcing himself to dredge up. But there are plenty of gropings of another sort. One year, halfway through a summer season at Yarmouth, he is propositioned by Frankie Howerd: "He threw himself lengthwise and alongside me on the dark leather settee while simultaneously dragging his slacks down and his shirt up." There is also a brief encounter with Tyrone Power, who invites him into the bath (Bob declines) and a rehashing of the story of his fling with Diana Dors. In its aftermath, Dors' notoriously mean and vicious husband, Denis Hamilton, attacks him with a cut-throat razor. Monkhouse's nifty knee-work saves him in the short term, and fortunately Hamilton dies of tertiary syphilis before he can carry out his threat to slit poor Bob's eyeballs.

This is all colourful, knockabout stuff which, if it sometimes verges on the prurient, at least has an energy the rest of his writing sometimes lacks - for example, the exhaustive lists of the people he has worked with. Many key figures in post-war British light entertainment flit across these pages: there are vignettes of everybody from Denis Main Wilson to Lew Grade, from Norman Wisdom to Tony Hancock. And Monkhouse has a nice line in wry, self-deprecating humour which suggests he is nowhere near as smug as he looks when presenting *The \$64,000 Question* or *Celebrity Squares*.

## Toon culture

Leslie Felperin Sharman

### Animating Culture:

#### Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era

Eric Smoodin, Rutgers University Press, \$37 (hb), \$15.95 (pb), 216pp

The blurb on the cover of *Animating Culture* baldly asserts that Eric Smoodin's generally fine study is "the first and only book to thoroughly analyse the animated short cartoon". In fact, there is a hefty amount of printed matter on animation, with glossy illustrations and large formats which would be hard to miss in any bookstore's film section. Granted, most of it is non-academic, but a few strong "thorough analyses" do exist, such as the two volumes of the American Film Institute's eclectic *The Art of the Animated Image*, Alan Cholodenko's grim *The Illusion of Life*, and Donald Crafton's influential *Before Mickey*, which comprehensively surveys animation immediately prior to the sound era that Smoodin examines.

What is original about this latest contribution is its avowed interest in "the intelligibility of cartoons in relation to audience, film exhibition, newspapers and magazines, censorship, and government". Where other critics have mapped the physical terrain of animation's production history and aesthetic intelligibility, Smoodin investigates the culture and "discourses about power, behaviour and social control" in which animation is implicated. Using methods characteristic of cultural studies and thorough archival research, *Animating Culture* attempts to bridge some of the interpretative gaps between the producers and sponsors of animated shorts, the animated

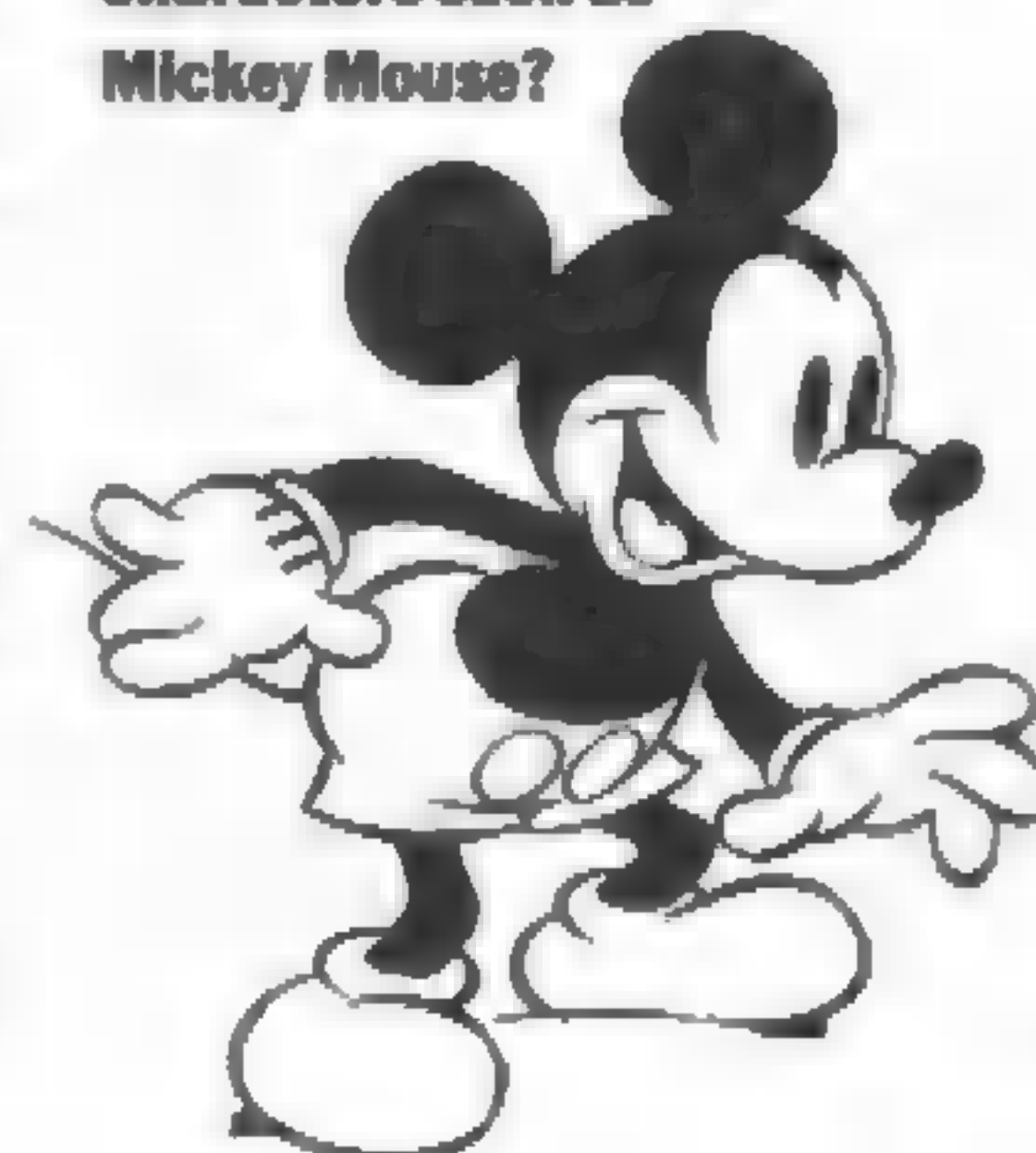
text itself, and the audience and sites of its reception in the 30s and 40s. But rather than seeing the relationships between them as monolithic and monological, Smoodin demonstrates how links between makers, films and spectators are imbued with power struggles over meaning and interpretation.

In the introduction Smoodin lucidly sets out what his five main chapters will consider: a heterogeneous array of textual artefacts and intricate social networks. It's a bit like watching someone juggling an orange, a bowling ball and a baton. The first chapter on 'Studio Strategies' plays off copyright material (legal description of individual films) against studio history, censorship and textual analysis. Chapters two and three look at the process of audience construction through a reading of selected first-run theatre film bills during the 30s and the Private Snafu cartoons in Frank Capra's *Army-Navy Screen Magazine* during the war. They argue that domestic and military film bills worked both to legitimate cultural tensions and to forge collective identity. Smoodin uncovers fascinating archival material. His investigation of the contexts and sites of exhibition not only illuminates the relationship between the audience and the process of 'social control', but raises issues about the relation of the shorts to class, race, gender and sexuality. These first three chapters use an "archaeological method" to elucidate the industry and the government's ideological projects. The conclusions are interesting, but despite the scrupulous use of secondary material, the inferences of intent remain speculative and reliant on the kind of traditional textual analysis that Smoodin distances himself from in the preface.

The last two chapters are more assured and stand on firmer critical ground. They discuss the construction in the popular press of "Disney discourse" and the US government's role as sponsor and critic of, and spy on, the animation industry. The interpretation of popular press material balances media studies and historicist research in an exemplary way. The last chapter builds from this foundation a complex edifice that encompasses Disney's involvement in US South American policy, the studio strike, and his complicated relations with the FBI. Incidentally, by gaining access to Disney's FBI files under the Freedom of Information Act, Smoodin uncovers much the same material as Marc Eliot's muck-raking exposé *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince*, soon to be published in the UK. The contribution of this chapter to Disneyology is ultimately more valuable and less salacious, laying documentary evidence of government intervention in production beside viewers' responses in order to bring forward larger questions about the social role of animation.

*Animating Culture* offers a concrete analysis of cinema audiences' complex and often contradictory relationship to a particular group of films at a specific moment in history. Considering the difficulty of recovering appropriate material, Smoodin's rigorous and well-written tome makes the best of a hard job. Its multi-method approach aligns it with some of the most lively recent work in film studies, while opening up new territory in what is often characterised as one of the discipline's last frontiers.

Disney discourse: how did government intervention and audience response influence characters such as Mickey Mouse?



# shorts

### Cinema: The First Hundred Years

David Shipman, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, £19.99, 384pp

Lavishly illustrated with good-quality stills, many of them full page, Shipman's year-by-year account celebrates cinema's centenary (reckoned here from 1893) at a breathless pace. What space there is for text has inevitably the feel of a list of titles, with films barely described. Nevertheless, there is a determination to get in every film of significance for any given year, while at the same time avoiding strange juxtapositions. Generic developments are neatly themed and contextualised to provide a reasonably good instant primer in cinema history that doesn't get in the way of the lush dynamism of the photography.

### Nazi-Retro Film: How German Narrative

#### Cinema Remembers the Past

Robert C. Reimer, Carol J. Reimer, Twayne Publishers, £9.50, 258pp

Curiously decorated with a cover redolent of Nazi chic, the Reimers' scholarly analysis of 100 German films made since 1945 examines the ways in which film-makers have tried to come to terms with Germany's Nazi past. Beginning with a chronology of the films under analysis, from Wolfgang Staudte's 1946 *The Murderers Are Among Us* to Agnieszka Holland's *Europa, Europa*, the book proceeds to define "Nazi-Retro" as a genre which leads to "retrograde thinking... at its most insidious it leads to a revisionism that sanitises and therefore falsifies the past." While many of the films under discussion have never been released in the UK, there are enough here that have to make the arguments comprehensible.

### The Incredibly Strange Film Book

Jonathan Ross, Simon and Schuster, £9.99, 290pp

Ross' passion for schlock manifested itself in his television series *The Incredibly Strange Film Show*, a creditable attempt to explain the pleasures of movie backwater trash to a wider public. In this thick wedge paperback, cunningly sized to match Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*, he is able to expand (a little) on the more television-unfriendly aspects of movie-making such as 'The History of Porn Films' and 'Russ Meyer'. His proclaimed intention is to rescue his material from the covetousness of trash buffs such as himself, and his method is the familiar matey proselytising of his television presentations. However, his chapter on Blaxploitation alone proves that he is no dilettante, but a genuine fan.

### The Faber Book of Movie Verse

Edited by Philip French and Ken Wlaschin, Faber and Faber, £20, 458pp

Uneasy bedfellows though cinema and poetry have often been, it was perhaps inevitable that Faber and Faber should seek to find a connection between its two most visible publishing commitments. While few examples of the successful collaboration between film and poetry spring to mind - the most obvious being Cocteau's films, the most popular Auden's poem for Basil Wright's 1936 film *Night Mail* - Philip French's typically erudite introductory essay discloses a long tradition of happy symbiosis. This hefty hardback proves that poems about the cinema abound in quality as well as number, and may be equally pertinent about the process of making movies as they are in eulogising the pleasures of watching them.



# *the* FULBRIGHT COMMISSION

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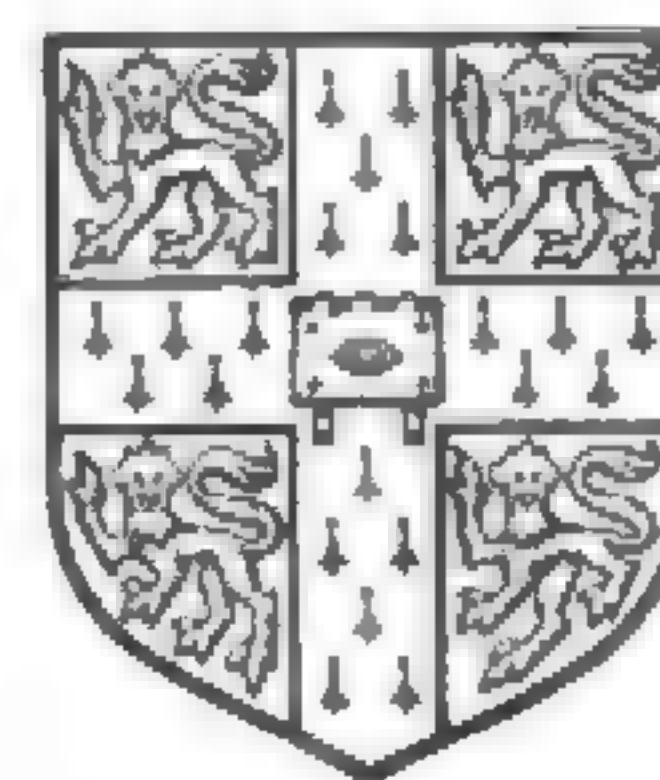
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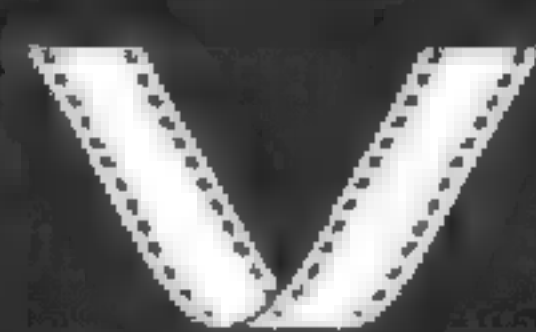
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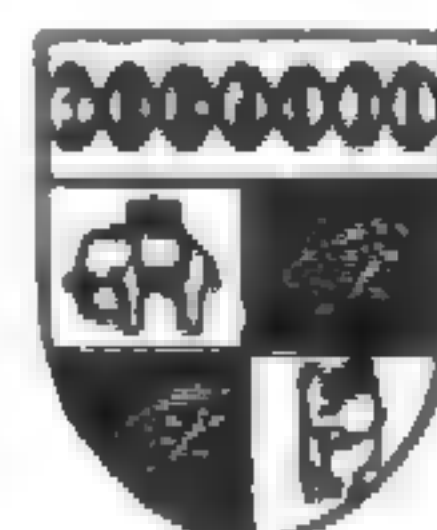
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# REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

## American Heart

USA 1992

Director: Martin Bell

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Entertainment

### Production Company

Avenue Entertainment  
In association with  
World Films

### Executive Producer

Cary Brokaw

### Producers

Rosilyn Heiler

Jeff Bridges

### Co-producer

Neil Koenigsberg

### Associate Producers

Mary Ellen Mark

Nancy Rae Stone

### Production Executive

Claudia Lewis

### Production Co-ordinators

Alisoun F. Lamb

Flashbacks/Vermont:

Katie Curran

LA:

Brett Aronowitz

### Production Managers

Nancy Rae Stone

Flashbacks/Vermont:

Robert V. Girolami

### Location Manager

Michael Leon

### Post-production

Supervisor

Leslie Leitner

### Casting

Reuben Cannon

and Associates

Cecily Adams

Seattle:

Roth Casting Associate

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

### Assistant Directors

Richard Hawley

Timothy Lonsdale

Randall LaFollette

Robert V. Girolami

Flashbacks/Vermont:

Anthony F. D'Esposi

### Screenplay

Peter Silverman

### Story

Martin Bell

Mary Ellen Mark

Peter Silverman

### Director of Photography

James R. Bagdonas

In colour

### Camera Operator

Tom Connole

### Steadicam Operators

Rick Tiedeman

Troy Smith

### Video Playback

Mitchell J. Wood

### Opticals

24 Hour Post

### Editor

Nancy Baker

### Production Designer

Joel Schiller

### Set Decorator

Rondi Tucker

### Set Dresser

Drew Pinning

### Lead Scenic Artist

Steve E. Eyrse

### Scenic Artist

Robert Warner

### Special Effects

Bob Riggs

Ray Brown

Terry Shattuck

Joel Youngerman

### Music

James Newton Howard

### Solo Guitar Performed by

Marc Bonilla

### Music Supervisor

Peter Afterman

### Music Editor

Sally Boldt

### Music Co-ordinator

Michael Mason

### Songs

"I'll Never Let Go of

Your Hand", "Jack's

### Flashback Theme"

by Tom Waits, Kathleen

Brennan, "I'm Crazy

"Bout My Baby",

"Jersey Girl" by and

performed by Tom

Waits: "Waiting For

My Child" by Sullivan

Pugh, performed by

The Gospel Fireballs:

"Fast Blues" by and

performed by Jeff

Porcaro, David Paich,

Lenny Castro, Mark

Bonilla; "Backstabbers"

by John Lee Hooker,

Al Smith, "This is Hip"

by John Lee Hooker,

performed by John Lee

Hooker; "Slow Hand"

by Michael Clark, John

Bettis, performed by

The Pointer Sisters;

"Cocktails For Two"

by Arthur Johnston,

Sam Coslow,

performed by Michael

White; "Do You Wanna

Touch Me" by Gary

Glitter, Mike Leander,

performed by Joan Jett

and the Blackhearts;

"Sunny Side of the

Street" by Jimmy

McHugh, Dorothy

Fields, performed

by Jeff Bridges

### Costume Design

Beatrice Aruna Pasztor

### Wardrobe Supervisor

Vanessa Vogel

### Make-up/Hair

Gina Monaci

### Tattoos

Bob Haaves

### Title Design

Pablo Ferro

### Titles

Cinema Research

Corporation

Photographs:

Mary Ellen Mark

Ethan Hoffman/

Picture Project

Martin Bell

### Supervising Sound Editor

Hamilton Sterling

### Sound Editors

Alison Fisher

Lauren Palmer

### ADR Editor

Nick Korda

### Foley Editor

Nancy Richardson

### Sound Recordists

Robert Anderson Jnr

Mark (Frito) Long

### Music:

Robert Schaper

### ADR Recordists

Bob Deschaine

David Jobe

### Foley Recordists

Carolyn Tapp

Marilyn Graf

Dolby stereo

consultant:

Steve F.B. Smith

### Sound Re-recordists

Michael Minkler

Robert Beemer

### Sound Effects Editors

Howard Neiman

John Joseph Thomas

John S. Edwards-

Younger

### Foley Artists

Kevin Bartnof

Hilda Hodges

### Technical Adviser

Edward Bunker

Jerry Esterly

### Stunt Co-ordinators

Chris Howell

Gil Combs

### Stunt Driver

Loyd Cattlett

### Cast

Jeff Bridges

Jack Kelson

Edward Furlong

Nick Kelson

Lucinda Jonney

Charlotte

Don Harvey

Rainey

Tracey Tyla Kapisky

Molly

John Boylan

Janitor

Grog Savigny

Young Jack

Jayne Entwistle

Monique

Willie Williams

Roosevelt Franklin

The Gospel Fireballs

Melvyn Hayward

Normandy

Kit McDonough

Landlady

Wren Walker

Lisa

Cristine McMurdo-Wallis

School Administrator

Charlotte London

Flo

Loyd Cattlett

Vernon the Bartender

Richard Joffray

Taxi Dispatcher Voice

Christian Frizzell

Rollie

Tracey Kapisky

Molly

### Benjamin Hinkle

Jared Hinkle

Roy

Flapjack

Creamo

Sharon Mitchell

Diane

Francisco Arenas

Moose

Michelle Matlock

Bandit

Marcus Chong

Terry Cosmo

Maggie Walsh

Freddie

Sam Strange

Stony

Mark Namer

Pool Bar Guy

Barbara Irvin

Nicole

Burke Pearson

Jack's Bum

Apollo Dukakis

Steve

Laura Bobovski

Girl in Food Bank

John DeLay

Building Supervisor

Gary Lee Dansonburg

Suburban Son

Todd Jamieson

Suburban Father

10,298 feet

114 minutes

his help. Later, Jack sees Charlotte and reveals his identity. She is initially embarrassed, but subsequently draws closer to him, and joins him and Nick on a day trip.

One night Rainey tries to interest Nick in helping him on a job; Nick refuses. Later Nick and some other kids go back to Molly's, where her mother arrives and creates a scene. Jack, worried that Nick is getting too involved with the street scene, cautions him about his friendship with Molly. He now includes Nick in his plans for Alaska. Later Nick, Molly and the other kids visit Molly's mother at the strip joint where she works. On the way back, Nick nearly gets caught after Molly dares him to steal a pair of shoes. When Jack finds Nick hiding the shoes and a couple of joints, he goes wild. Nick hands him money that he has earned for the Alaska trip, which Jack stashes away. Later the money is stolen. The unsympathetic landlady serves them an eviction notice for unpaid rent. Jack and Nick fight after Nick learns his mother was a prostitute.

Nick runs off and tries to survive on the streets; Jack, now living at Charlotte's, hunts for him. Nick accepts a burglary job from Rainey. Later Jack meets Nick; they row, and Jack loses his job cleaning windows. During the burglary, a friend of Nick's is shot. Nick returns to the warehouse he has been living in, and finds Jack there. Jack gives him the money for the ferry to Alaska and they arrange to meet on the boat. Jack confronts Rainey and they fight, with Rainey left unconscious; but Rainey catches up with him at the ferry and shoots him. Nick finds his father slowly dying as the ferry makes its way to Alaska.

American Heart is the first fiction feature by documentarist Martin Bell. It returns him to the grim, rain-swept streets of Seattle, where he and his wife, photo-journalist Mary Ellen Mark, shot the *vérité* piece *Streetwise* (1984). That film chronicled the lives of a bunch of kids living rough in the city, including DeWayne, a 14-year-old who dreamed of going to Alaska with his con of a dad. The boy committed suicide before the trip could ever happen. In *American Heart*, Bell rescues his



Kids on the skids: Edward Furlong



memory, reuniting him with the parent that he never saw again.

DeWayne's real life story might be beyond pathos but if it were invented it might seem patly contrived. Meanwhile Nick and Jack's tale wouldn't seem out of place in one of Warner's Depression-era movies. *Bicycle Thieves* also springs to mind; Jack and Nick's dream of Alaska is unravelled when their money and Jack's bike are stolen from their digs.

But despite an ending that smacks of dramatic desperation, *American Heart* keeps sentimentality at bay. Bell has the same clear eye for his characters' environment as he did in *Streetwise*. The low-rent lifestyle is not invested with sleazy kitsch glamour. Here the white trash folk are exactly that - people who have been thrown out and abandoned by society, orphans of the state. There is nothing to fetishize in Nick and Jack's sparsely furnished, beige-coloured room with its stained divan mattress and thin blankets. The bump-and-grind joint where Molly's mother performs her weary routine is shot in a harsh light. Molly peeps through the glass window in awe, later recalling her mom's movements, remembering to keep the smile on her face when she go-go dances in a bikini at a stag night. The moment is dispassionately depicted; Bell does not care to moralise. But as Nick looks on, the audience knows from the expression on his face just how sad he is that his young friend's life has come to this.

*American Heart* draws its strength from Edward Furlong's and Jeff Bridges' performances (Bridges executive-produced it, and in many ways it is his film). Furlong, who showed such promise in *Terminator 2*, is a young actor to watch, following in the hard mould of Jodie Foster or the late River Phoenix. He holds his character in, speaking volumes with the blankest of looks on his elfin face. Meanwhile, a fat, long-haired Bridges gets under Jack's grubby, tattooed skin. Though the film has been scripted (by Seattle-based writer Peter Silverman, whose only other prominent credits are the TV series *Moonlighting* and *Hill Street Blues*), it feels as though these two have injected an improvisational touch or two. The result is an affecting account of a father who, though at first dismissive, attempts to do right by his son and be a dad in the most traditional of ways, imparting advice on girls and other buddiesome banter ("you keep me straight, I'll keep you straight"). It's as if Jack is earnestly learning to do the dad thing from some old film or book, so estranged has he become from the son whose only other previous object of emotional attachment was a pet pig. Jack buys him a pair of binoculars for the Neverland of Alaska, and takes him on a day trip in which they end up having a B-B-Q in Charlotte's taxi. It's an attempt at the red-blooded all-American dad. But though Jack is shot only in the final scene, there is a sense that throughout the film he is trying to staunch the wounds.

**Lizzie Francke**

## Ba Wang Bie Ji (Farewell My Concubine)

Hong Kong/China 1993

Director: Chen Kaige

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Artificial Eye

### Production Company

Tomson (HK) Films  
Company Ltd  
In association with  
China Film

Co-production Corp/

Beijing Film Studio

### Executive Producers

Hsu Bin

Jade Hsu

### Producer

Hsu Feng

### Line Producers

Li Zhenduo

Zhang Xia

Sun Ying

### Associate Producer

Donald Ranvaud

### Production Co-ordinator

Sunday Sun

### Production Managers

Cai Rubin

Lu Yinpei

### Unit Production Manager

Bai Yu

### Post-production

### Co-ordinators

Gao Xulan

Chi Xiaoning

### Assistant Directors

Zhang Jinzhan

Bai Yu

Jin Ping

Zhang Jinting

### Screenplay

Lilian Lee

Lu Wei

Based on the novel

by Lilian Lee

### Director of Photography

Gu Changwei

In colour

### Camera Operator

Zhao Faquan

### Steadicam Operator

Dong Gang

Lia Baoquan

### Editor

Pei Xiaonan

### Artistic Director

Chen Huaikai

### Art Directors

Yang Yuhe

Yang Zhanjia

### Set Decorators

Wang Chunpu

Zhang Ruihe

Song Wangxiang

Cui Xiurong

### Set Dressers

Liu Zhiping

Xie Xinsheng

Zhang Jungui

### Music

Zhao Jiping

### Music Conductor

Hu Bingyu

### Music Performed by

Central Orchestra  
of China

Orchestra of the

Peking Opera Academy

### Peking Opera Director

Shi Yansheng

### Peking Opera Music

### Designer

Tang Jirong

### Costume Design

Chen Changmin

### Make-up

Fan Qingshan

Xu Guangrui

### Soundmen

Yang Zhanshan

Han Lin

### Sound Recordist

Tao Jing

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordist

Hu He

### Peking Opera Stunts

Diao Li

Li Yan

### English Subtitles

Linda Jaivin

### Cast

Leslie Cheung

Cheng Dieyi

Zhang Fengyi

Duan Xiaolou

Gong Li

Juxian

Lu Qi

Guan Jifa

Ying Da

Na Kun

### Ge You

Master Yuan

Li Chun

Xiao Si (Teenage)

Lei Han

Xiao Si (Adult)

Tong Di

Old Man Zhang

Ma Mingwei

Douzi (Child)

Yin Zhi

Douzi (Teenage)

Fei Yang

Shitou (Child)

Zhao Hailong

Shitou (Teenage)

Li Dan

Laizi

Jiang Wenli

Douzi's Mother

Zhi Yitong

Aoki Saburo

David Wu

Red Guard

14,156 feet

156 minutes

### Subtitles

Beiping (now Beijing), 1925. Effeminate and frail, Douzi is indentured at Guan Jifa's Peking Opera Academy by his mother, a prostitute no longer able to raise him; Guan accepts the boy only after an extra finger on one of his hands has been chopped off. Other boys vilify Douzi, but the athletic Shitou becomes his friend and protector. Life for the boys is harsh, and Douzi one day runs away with classmate Laizi, but a visit to the Peking Opera entrances them and

leads them to return; their punishments provoke Laizi's suicide. Douzi triumphs in an amateur performance at the home of Zhang, a former imperial eunuch, and is afterwards sexually molested by the host. He is traumatised, but now accepts that his destiny is to play female roles.

1937. The Japanese army is approaching Beiping. Shitou and Douzi are now stars of Na Kun's opera troupe under the stage names Duan Xiaolou and Cheng Dieyi. Xiaolou specialises in male martial roles and Dieyi in female roles; they are famous for playing the embattled King of Chu and his concubine Yu in the opera *Farewell My Concubine*. Dieyi resists overtures from wealthy opera patron Yuan Shiqing until Xiaolou falls for Juxian, a prostitute from the House of Blossoms. Dieyi's jealousy and moral disapproval of Juxian lead him to visit Master Yuan's house, where he accepts the gift of an antique sword and succumbs to Yuan's sexual advances. That night, Japanese troops enter the city. Dieyi interrupts Xiaolou and Juxian's engagement party to announce that their stage partnership is over. But when Xiaolou is arrested for insulting a Japanese officer, Dieyi wins his release by singing for the Japanese. Xiaolou, ungrateful, accuses Dieyi of betraying his race; Dieyi turns to opium for solace. Their estrangement is ended by their former teacher Guan, who dies telling them how to comport themselves. They adopt a young trainee from Guan's academy, naming him Xiao Si.

1945. Soon after the Japanese surrender, Dieyi is charged with being a collaborator. Juxian, who has miscarried Xiaolou's child, urges Xiaolou to intercede for Dieyi, so that they will no longer owe him anything. Dieyi, dazed by opium, blows his chance of an acquittal in court; but he is released anyway on the orders of a Kuomintang officer who wants to see him perform. By 1948, with Dieyi still lost in opium dreams, Xiaolou is reduced to selling fruit on the streets. 1949. The Communists take the city, renaming it Beijing. Yuan is denounced at a mass meeting. Xiao Si, now an eager young militant, enlists the aid of Xiaolou and Juxian in curing Dieyi's opium addiction, but soon after turns against his adoptive 'parent' and steals his stage role as Concubine Yu. Dieyi abandons the theatre.

1966. The Cultural Revolution erupts, and Xiao Si leads a group of young Red Guards in interrogations of Xiaolou and Dieyi about their past political 'crimes'. Under extreme duress, Xiaolou and Dieyi betray each other, and Xiaolou is pressured into saying that he never loved the former prostitute Juxian. Soon after, Juxian hangs herself. 1977. As China begins to recover from the Cultural Revolution, Xiaolou and Dieyi are reunited on an opera stage for one last performance of *Farewell My Concubine*. At the play's climax Dieyi, identifying totally with the character of the concubine, commits suicide with the sword he received from Master Yuan.

Covering much the same historical period as *The Last Emperor*, and with much the same Steadicam sweep, *Farewell My Concubine* looks very much like a political corrective to Bertolucci's epic. *The Last Emperor* (in which Chen Kaige had a prominent cameo role) moved from Qing Dynasty imperial exotica to Japanese-fascist decadence to a benign view of the Communist 'reinvention' of Chinese society, faithfully reflecting Party-line clichés at every stage of the historical pageant. Chen's film, however, offers a diametrically opposed reading of China's modern history. It starts out with grass-roots hardships at the Peking Opera Academy in the 1920s; the emphasis on poverty and on physical and emotional pain effectively blocks any underlying impulse to romanticise the 'old society'. It sails through the nightmare of the war and the years of Japanese occupation with the minimum necessary denunciation of Japanese militarism, preferring to stress the indifference of art to politics, and to note that there were Japanese officers perfectly capable of appreciating the finer points of Chinese culture. And it views China's decades under Communist government as a rising tide of lies, hypocrisies and betrayals, with the 'new masters' behaving at least as badly as their Japanese predecessors. This is a strong (and, for a made-in-China film, brave) account of China's agony, and it has recognisable roots in Chen Kaige's four earlier features.

In other respects, of course, this is a major departure for Chen. His first big-budget, studio-shot film, it also marks his first work with established movie stars and his first hesitant engagement with the demands of melodrama. It seems fitting that the result shared the Cannes Palme d'Or with *The Piano*, since Chen, like Jane Campion, had suffered a bruising in previous years at Cannes. *King of the Children* and *Life on a String* both played in competition without winning prizes; neither attracted the kind of critical hostility that *Sweetie* did at the festival, but both ran aground on the general ignorance of Chinese history, politics and culture. Critics and audiences were unable to supply the larger perspectives needed to make sense of Chen's subtle and aesthetically refined allegories. *Concubine* confronts that ignorance head-on, using Lilian Lee's popular novel as the basis for a flagrantly unrealistic drama of love, treachery and death that is readily accessible to any audience willing to watch a subtitled movie. Miramax's acquisition of rights for all English-speaking territories, concluded before Cannes, has clinched Chen's shift from small art-house audiences to a broad public. It has also resulted in some Hollywood-style 'fine tuning': Miramax has negotiated 14 minutes of cuts with Chen since the Cannes showing, and the original English title *Farewell to My Concubine* has been abridged.

Purists are already lamenting Chen's 'sell-out' to commercialism without, however, suggesting what other ►





Nights at the opera: Leslie Cheung

◀ way forward he might have found as a Chinese director needing a global audience to survive. It's true that *Concubine* is a much less 'personal' film than Chen's previous ones. This time, no character represents the director's point of view, and the sprawling storyline resists being reduced to any level of metaphor or allegory. As in Zhang Yimou's *The Story of Qiu Ju* and Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite*, events here mean exactly what they seem to mean; there is no resort to ambiguity or evasion. Unlike his contemporaries, however, Chen has opted for high artifice rather than 'realism' in his approach to China's unresolved traumas.

Although the storyline spans some five decades and the background chronology respects historical fact, Chen makes no attempt to age his main characters convincingly and plays fast and loose with historical credibility. Chen's point is that the film's central *gestalt*, the eternal tension between male and female, between adults and children, between people and the roles they play, is essentially timeless. Xiaolou, Dieyi, Juxian and Xiao Si are all semi-detached from their historical roots; they are in their own time warp, fated to act out their passions and conflicts oblivious (or, better, impervious) to most of what happens around them. The main characters are represented ahistorically because they measure themselves against operatic archetypes, not everyday role models. Their reality, one could say, is purely existential.

Where this concept becomes problematic is in the depiction of homosexuality. Lilian Lee's original novel (since rewritten to bring it into conformity with the screenplay) was straightforwardly a gay love/hate story, squarely centred on the relationship between Xiaolou and Dieyi. Chen Kaige's major change to the book was to boost the part of Juxian from a two-page walk-on to a full scale role for Gong Li; this is perhaps justified by the resulting sharp contrast between Concubine Yu as a courtly female archetype and Juxian as a brassy and opportunistic hooker. But the inflation of Juxian's role also prevents the film from dealing with Dieyi's homosexual feelings for Xiaolou; in fact, it helps it to evade the issue altogether. The introduction of Douzi/Dieyi as a child with six fingers on one hand suggests that he is a freak of nature (biological determinism?), but the following scenes in which the boy is forced against all his instincts to accept female roles seem designed to offer ammunition to the Clause 28 lobby: ruthless cultural conditioning is shown to 'promote' homosexuality in the boy. As a child, Shitou/Xiaolou is sensitive to the plight of his effeminate friend and becomes a virile young protector, sharing his blanket and caressing Douzi tenderly in the bath; but the adult Xiaolou is crassly insensitive to Dieyi's feelings in a way that makes nonsense of the boyhood scenes. Whether this evasion of the gay issues is evidence of directorial homophobia, as some critics are claiming, or whether Chen Kaige simply

failed to think through the implications of his borrowed storyline remains moot. Either way, the resulting blockage leaves a major dent in the film's credibility as psychodrama.

Much less controversial is the overall success of the film's visual and aural aesthetics. Cinematographer Gu Changwei and sound designer Tao Jing achieve wonders in creating the fictional space for the film's abstracted characters, giving the film a persuasive unity and coherence. It is their contribution that enables Chen to pull off the feat of simultaneously rooting his story in the historical process and abstracting his main characters from that process. Fittingly, the film's sense of the push-pull of history comes to a head in the Cultural Revolution scenes of betrayal and mutual recrimination. These are undoubtedly the scenes that have the strongest personal meaning for Chen, who here publicly makes amends for denouncing his own father at the time by crediting the man himself, Chen Huai-kai, as the film's 'artistic director'. These same scenes, with Dieyi and Xiaolou confronting each other across a bonfire of opera libretti, also contain the film's key image: an inserted close-up of Xiao Si experiencing something like orgasm at the moment that Xiaolou cannot bring himself to say that Dieyi was Master Yuan's lover. All of the film's tensions, contradictions and evasions come together in that one shot, making the film more than worthy of the director of *Yellow Earth* and *King of the Children*.

**Tony Rayns**

## Bound and Gagged: A Love Story

USA 1992

Director: Daniel B. Appleby

**Certificate**  
18

**Distributor**

Metro Tartan

**Production Company**  
Cinescope

**Executive Producers**  
Dennis J. Mahoney

Jay Harjula

**Producer**

Dennis J. Mahoney

**Co-producer**

Richard C. Weinman

**Additional Line Producer**

Sherry Vinsen

**Supervising Production**

**Co-ordinator**

Kay Hayes

**Production Co-ordinators**

Maria P. Ojile

Chrysa Freeman

**Production Managers**

David Hughes

Kristine Sorensen

**Location Managers**

Bob Medcraft

Karen Hickey

**Casting Co-ordinator**

Barbara Shelton

**Assistant Directors**

Philip Elins

Steve Buhai

Robin Keller

Daniel Carrey

Erica Spano

Elizabeth Campbell

**Screenplay**

Daniel B. Appleby

**Director of Photography**

Dean Lent

In colour

**Additional Photography**

Vincent Donohue

Roger Schmitz

**2nd Unit Director**

of Photography

David Moe

**VTR**

Paul Assimacopoulos

Victor Prokopov

**Video Editor**

Bruce Carlson

**Graphic Design**

Debra Cohen

**Editor**

Kaye Davis

**Production Designer**

Dane Pizzuti Krogman

**Art Directors**

Dane Pizzuti Krogman

Annie Johnson

**Head Scenic**

Brian Sobaski

**Storyboard Artist**

Aaron Hoffman

**Graffiti Artist**

Michael Handley

**Pyrotechnics**

Aaron Hoffman

**Music**

William Murphy

**Music Supervisor**

Dawn Soler

**Music Editor**

Matt Green

**Music Effects Design**

Matt Green

**Songs**

"Jalousie" performed

by Tango Project;

"I've Got A Feeling" by

and performed by

Fudge Factory Inc;

"Arpad's Guz". "Sota".

"Cunovo Oro"

(traditional). "Serbian

Kolo #3" (traditional).

"Brave Bombardier"

(traditional) performed

by Boiled In Lead;

"State of Grace" by and

performed by The Miss

Alans; "Meantime" by

and performed by Jill

Holly; "Boys Will Be

Boys" by Martin Zellar,

performed by The Gear

Daddies; "Sitar Sex"

by Clay Griffen; "Love

Strikes Hard" by and

performed by Carol

Pope; "Perfect Day"

by and performed

by Lou Reed;

"It's Man/Woman Blues

Thang" by and

performed by Scott

ValSchoick; Joe

DeLaCruz; "Musette

Italia" by and

performed by Paul

Tomczyk; "Everything

Hurts" by Stanley

Dural Jnr, performed

by Buckwheat Zydeco

**Conga Line Choreography**

Myron Johnson

**Costume Design**

Deborah Fiscus

**Additional:**

Hala Bahmet

**Hair/Make-up Artists**

Donna Deisher

Barb Fogel

**Titles/Opticals**

Hollywood Optical

Systems

**Dialogue Editor**

Thomas Jones

**Sound Recordists**

John Warner

Mike Severson

Matt Quast

ADR:

Paul Ratajczak

Foley:

■ Carr

Dolby stereo

**Sound Re-recordists**

Paul Ratajczak

■ Carr

**Sound Effects Editors**

Leslie Engle

Matt Green

Duce Vines

Mark Ralston

**Foley Artists**

Sean Rowe

Michael Bromberg

**Creative Consultant**

Bruce Carlson

**Stunt Co-ordinator**

Ky Michaelson

**Cast**

Ginger Lynn Allen

Leslie

Karen Black

Carla

Chris Denton

Cliff

Elizabeth Saltarrell

Elizabeth

Mary Ella Ross

Lida

Chris Mulkey

Steve

Abdul Salaam El Razzak

Santa Abdul

Andrea Scarpa

Italian Lover

Gene Larche

Soaring Eagle

Phyllis Wright

Nurse/Clerk

Bill Schoppert

Molester

Hal Atkinson

Doctor

Joe Minjares

Davis

Peter Williams

Mr Williams



**Randy Schmidt**  
Body Builder  
**Sarah Todd**  
Hassled Waitress  
**Travis James**  
Garth Schmacher  
Sleazy Diners  
**Patty Shaw**  
Meter Maid  
**Pete Jackson**  
Bar Cop  
**Anton Stiller**  
E.R. Doctor  
**Lisa Jensen**  
Biker Woman  
**Leonard Rabatin**  
Bus Ticket Clerk  
**Michael Bodino**  
Bus Driver  
**Bill Howard**  
Golfer  
**Julia Tolven**  
**Michael De Leon**  
Alley Lovers

**Kelly Till**  
Ann Marie Strand  
Fighting Women  
**Elizabeth Campbell**  
Billy Jaap  
Bar Room Dancers  
**Victor Propokov**  
Randy Adamsick  
**Pasoth Pin**  
Failed Suicide Patients  
**Paul Tomczyk**  
Accordion Player

**3,421 feet**  
**94 minutes**

Concerned for the welfare of her lover Leslie, who refuses to leave her abusive husband Steve, the impulsive Elizabeth decides to abduct her. Enlisting the help of her best friend Cliff, whose wife's infidelity has recently driven him to attempt suicide, she chloroforms Leslie and bundles her into a car. Bound and gagged on the back seat, Leslie is told that Elizabeth is performing an "intervention"; she is taking her to a professional who will deprogramme Leslie's feelings of dependency for her husband. Unable to convince Elizabeth to take her home, Leslie manages to phone Steve for help, and he sets out after them.

Cliff, who has been mute since he blew the top of his head off, is tormented by visions of his wife having sex with other men and laughing at him. He resumes his suicide attempts - bashing his head against the dashboard, drinking anti-freeze, shoving a screwdriver up his nose - but in vain. Leslie tries several times to escape, but when she asks for help for a man at a petrol station while Elizabeth is sleeping, he tries to rape her. Elizabeth wakes and runs over his hands with the car. Unable to keep Leslie sufficiently in line, she finally locks her in the boot. This is too much for Cliff, who has recovered the powers of speech. He gets out of the car, leaving Elizabeth to reach Carla, the deprogrammer, alone. With Carla's help and advice, Leslie resolves to get away from both Steve and Elizabeth. At the bus station, she meets Cliff, who has been cruising outside a biker bar and is now a new man. Elizabeth and Steve converge outside; they fight, but Leslie manages to board the bus.

*Bound and Gagged: A Love Story* would be nothing more than a nasty, dim-witted little film if first-time feature director Daniel B. Appleby, producer of several award-winning documentaries on domestic violence, had not had some serious points to make about abuse. As he explains in a three-page statement which accompanies the production notes, this film was a labour of love, taking two and a half years to complete, and utilising all his knowledge of the various stages of recovery from dependency ("break-

down, breakthrough and transformation"). The ultimate result is hideously misjudged.

"Of course," writes Appleby, "the challenge was to avoid becoming didactic or polemic. Humour, I think, allowed us to avoid that particular pit-fall." This is disingenuous: Appleby permits himself to sneak in some stunningly obvious moralising through Carla, an unlikely *deus ex machina* who appears at the end for the sole reason of telling Elizabeth, "What you did to Leslie was just as abusive as what her husband did." Really, we could never have guessed that a rad-fem bisexual kidnapper could possibly be as abusive as an unreconstructed Neanderthal. If that's bad, the humour is worse: it's not the humour of recognition, but crude freak-show comedy. There's an unnecessarily mean-spirited scene in a suicide ward, and Appleby gives us seemingly endless footage of Cliff waddling around with his soggy bandaged head, which keeps getting smashed. Appleby goes to some lengths to denounce the ultra-violence currently in vogue in the art houses ("It's enough to make you sick if you think about it," he notes primly), and he does refrain from making his own film too bloody. But it is hard to see how the sour sadism of a scene where Elizabeth runs over the hands of the would-be rapist - one hand at a time, with crunching bone effects on the soundtrack - is a preferable alternative to a hail of bullets.

On every level, the film remains resolutely unengaging, almost repugnant. It is muddily photographed and poorly scripted. Among the cast, only Chris Mulkey, who brings a buffoonish gusto to his scenes, shows any signs of independent life, and he is just reprising his role as Hank Jennings in *Twin Peaks*.

Former porn star Ginger Lynn Allen struggles hard to convey the psychology of a habitual victim: nevertheless, her smudged, passive Leslie arouses some sympathy even when she sounds as if she is reading her lines off an autocue. Her helplessness is convincing - we long for Leslie to punch Elizabeth in the nose, even though the film's occasional lapses into believability prevent that incidental pleasure.

As the film drags on, we begin to feel as trapped as Leslie, and a lot less willingly. Despite its gruesomely bad taste, *Bound and Gagged* is a dour little movie which takes no pleasure in the perversity of its characters. Their cruelty is expressed only in the most exhausted clichés: Elizabeth forcing Leslie to put on black underwear so that she looks more like a sex toy with her hands cuffed behind her, Steve attempting to rape Elizabeth because he has "a theory about lesbians".

At the end, a moral flashes onto the screen: "better to have loved and lost... than to shove a screwdriver up your nose." But a screwdriver would be less painful than to sit through a minute of this again. *Bound and Gagged: A Love Story* is awful, which is unfortunate. The fact that it is also well-meaning is quite simply stupefying.

**Caren Myers**

## Century

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Stephen Pollakoff

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Electric Pictures

### Production Companies

BBC/Beambright

### Executive Producers

Mark Shivas

Ruth Caleb

### Producer

Therese Pickard

### Associate Producer

Ralph Wilton

### Production Executive

Geoffrey Paget

### Production Co-ordinator

Vivien Jordan

### Location Manager

Angus More Gordon

### Casting

Joyce Gallie

### Assistant Directors

Sean Guest

John Spencer

Beni Turkson

### Screenplay

Stephen Pollakoff

### Director of Photography

Witold Stok

### In colour

### Camera Operator

Peter Cavaciuti

### 2nd Unit:

Andrew Speller

### Editor

Michael Parkinson

### Production Designer

Michael Pickwood

### Art Director

Henry Harris

### Music

Michael Gibbs

### Music Producer

Andy Park

### Choreography

Geraldine Stephenson

### Costume Design

Anushia Nieradzik

Daphne Dare

### Make-up Designer

Korka Nieradzik

### Title Design

Chris Allies

### Titles Opticals

Peerless Camera

### Company

### Dialogue Editor

Jeremy Child

### Footsteps Editor

Maria Walker

### ADR Editor

Shirley Shaw

### Sound Recordist

Peter Edwards

### Music:

Tony Philpott

### Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordist

Hugh Strain

### Medical Adviser

Doctor Ghislaine

Lawrence

### Cast

Charles Dance

Professor Mandry

Clive Owen

Paul Reisner

Miranda Richardson

Clara

Robert Stephens

Mr Reisner

Joan Hickson

Mrs Whiteweather

Lena Heady

Miriam

Neil Stuke

Felix

Liza Walker

Katie

Joseph Bennett

Edwin

Carlton Chance

James

Graham Loughbridge

Theo

Alexis Daniel

Thomas

Ian Shaw

Meredith

Bruce Alexander

Interrogator

Mark Strong

Policeman

Dall Sullivan

Theo's Girl

Mark Hadfield

Club Performer

Geoffrey Beavers

Lecturer

Trevor Cooper

David Barras

Posse Men

David Roderick

Young Boy at Front

Door

Michael Burrell

Doctor Makin

Allie Byrne

First Girl in Basement

Nicholas Gloaves

Daniel

Anna Chancellor

Woman in Police

Station

Katherine Best

Sick Girl

Dorothea Phillips

Lady at Party

**10,064 feet**

**112 minutes**



Age of contempt: Clive Owen

duced to Mrs Whiteweather, the Institute's patron, who says she doesn't mind what kind of research goes on as long as it does not involve dogs and chimpanzees. Paul asks Clara out to an exhibition with Felix, but spends most of the time discussing Felix's new discoveries, offering to support his research project into insulin. Later he visits Mandry and tries to persuade him to back Felix. The professor seems determined, however, to dismiss the project, leaving the notes languishing in a cupboard, where Paul eventually discovers them. After an argument, Paul is temporarily banned from the institute. He visits Clara and the two end up in bed.

A few days later, Mr Reisner finds Paul at Clara's. Pretending everything is all right, Paul takes Mr Reisner on a tour of the institute, but they bump into Mandry and another argument flares up during which Paul accuses Mandry of professional jealousy. The professor bans Paul for good and threatens to ruin his career elsewhere. Later, Paul is visited by the police who question his family's residential status. Undeterred, Paul starts practising medicine again, tending to the poor who camp near the institute.

Many of the women have infections caused by enforced sterilization. Knowing that Mandry, with his new passion for eugenics, is behind this, Paul tells Mrs Whiteweather that animals are being experimented on at the institute, and consequently, she closes it down. Paul then renews his friendship with Felix and invites him - and Clara - to his father's New Year's party for 1900, to which Mandry has also been invited. Having asked his old mentor to leave, he then introduces Clara to his father. In a coda, Paul explains that Mandry disappeared off the medical scene, Felix did some interesting work on diabetes, and he and Clara continued to live together while setting up a country practice.

Like its title, *Century* is a film weighed down with significance, calculated to conjure up *fin de siècle* anxieties. It chronicles the dawning of an age which was apparently as much excited about the moving



◀ staircase as about the 'new woman'. Potentially, such a turning point in history should be fascinating to examine, but Stephen Poliakoff fails to make the ideas his story alive or affecting.

The key problem is with the characterization of Professor Mandry. As the film draws to a close, Paul mourns the passing into oblivion of a man who was too dazzling an intellect for his own good. Sadly, the audience are never persuaded of Mandry's powers. If only Mandry had shown some Faustian zeal behind the dandy's disdain, it would have supplied the film with the dramatic confrontation that it so badly needs: a plausible tension between Paul and his surrogate father. It would have also propelled the debate about ethics and scientific progress that defines their opposition.

Poliakoff has cited the interest in eugenics of such progressive contemporary thinkers as H.G. Wells, Bernard Shaw and Marie Stopes as source material. It is a difficult conundrum that such well-meaning people had a genuine conviction in the benefits of a concept that would eventually be used to justify the slaughter of millions in the Great War. Mandry, we are meant to believe, is up there with Shaw and his peers. Perhaps Poliakoff should have concentrated on this figure and followed him into the dark heart of his beliefs.

As it is, when Paul and one of Mandry's victims attend a Christmas lecture to hear him talk about "contamination" and the "underclass", the professor's avuncular hospitality fails to chill. Nor is it particularly shocking that Mrs Whiteweather – unmoved when she hears that women have been dying from Mandry's botched operations – only shuts down the institute when Paul tells her the professor has been conducting experiments on God's "higher animals" – dogs and monkeys.

*Century* is built on disturbing truths: the charitable rich who put pets before humans, the introduction of legislation to monitor the movements of 'aliens', the pathologizing of the sexual activities of the working class. The comparison with the present is clear.

Certainly this is a suitably drab costume drama. But that is even more reason to give it dramatic vigour. Perhaps Poliakoff should have watched the television documentary series 'The Nineties', which drew on the recollections of those who had grown up with this century. One of the most affecting – and shocking – pieces of television this year was surely the segment in which a Scottish doctor recalled treating a tenement child dying of diphtheria, frustrated by the inadequate facilities and helpless as she slipped away. His eyes brimmed with tears at the memory, particularly that the child's throat was so swollen she could not cry with pain. This is the legacy of the twentieth century and while all its progresses are being dismantled before our eyes, Poliakoff, who obviously has the best intentions, should be bolder in his attack.

**Lizzie Francke**

## Friends

United Kingdom/France 1993

Director: Elaine Proctor

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Metro Tartan

### Production Companies

Friends Production/  
Chrysalide Films/Rio  
In association with  
Channel Four Films  
With the participation  
of British Screen/  
Canal Plus  
With assistance from  
The European Co-  
production Fund (UK)

### Producer

Judith Hunt

### Production Co-ordinator

Melanie Viner Cuneo

### Production Managers

Sheila Fraser Milne

South Africa:

Gail Honiball

France:

Gilles Sacuto

### Unit Manager

Jaco Espach

### Location Manager

Jaco Espach

### Post-production Supervisor

Sheila Fraser Milne

### Casting

Moonyeenn Lee

### Assistant Directors

Dominique Combe

Alan Robinson

Rhodwell Mzamo

Gubese

Micheal Washington

Liz Legum

Robyn Slovo

### Screenplay

Elaine Proctor

### Director of Photography

Dominique Chapuis

### Colour

Technicolor

### Editor

Tony Lawson

### Production Designer

Carmel Collins

### Art Director

Mark Wilby

### Set Dressers

Hamid Croukamp

Vicki Driman

### Storyboard Artist

Fenella Beyers

### Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Massimo Vico

### Music

Rachel Portman

### Conductor

David Snell

### Music Performed by

Soprano Saxophone:

David Roach

### Songs

"Droomyrou" by and

performed by Lucas

L. Maree; "Inkululeko"

by and performed by

Dolly Rathebe; "The

Boy From New York

City" by John Taylor,

George Davis,

performed by Darts;

"Dreams of the

Homeland" by Elias

Maluleke, Felani

Gumbi; "Untangawam"

by Patty Nokwe,

performed by Dambisa

Kente; "Mamhlanje"

by Victor Nozincama,

performed by Abdullah

Ibrahim, Johnny Oyani

### Costume Design

Moir Meyer

### Wardrobe Supervisor

Jayne Forbers

### Make-up/Hair

Anni Bartels

### Titles/Opticals

The Optical

Partnership

### Sound Editor

Rodney Glenn

### Dialogue Editor

Derek Holding

### Foley Editor

Keith Lowes

### Sound Recordist

Robin Harris

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Robin O'Donoghue

Dominic Lester

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Gavin Mey

### Stunts

Graham Press

Thuli Mabaso

Philip Notununu

Maud Ngema

### Zulu Translation

Doctor Nhlanhla

Maake

Tu Nokwe

### Cast

Kerry Fox

Sophie

Dambisa Kente

Thoko

Michele Burgers

Aninka

Marius Weyers

Johan

Tertius Meintjes

Jeremy

Dolly Rathebe

Innocentia

Wilma Stockenstrom

Iris

Carol Trichardt

Rheinhardt

Anne Cartois

Sophie's Mother

Ralph Draper

Sophie's Father

Mary Twala

Grace

Maphiki Mabohi

Daphne

Joe Kubatsi

Mzwandile

Vanessa Cooke

Prison Warder

Jerry Mofokeng

Thami

Trevi Jean Le Pere

Jeremy's Lover

Neil McCarthy

Young Man in Cafe

Motshabi Tyelele

Thembi

Archie Ngwenya

Gift

Vusi Kunene

Chippa Sithole

Macbeth Khumalo

Noxolo Mabuya

Co-accused

Lizzy Mooketsi

Cleaning Lady

Andre Lombard

Airport Soldier

Willem Roussouw

Soldier's Wife

Lindsey Stroh

Young Sophie

Louisa Twala

Young Grace

Pat Pillai

Robyn Slovo

Attorneys

Innocentia Tshoaeli

Regina Mtali

David Phetoe

Priest

Emmanuel Mohlamme

Brother of Detainee

Susan Pam-Grant

Neighbour

Charles Vermoulen

Hannes

Letitia Eilers

Lady in Turkish Bath

Albert Maritz

Drunk Man at

Wedding

Louis Seboko

Sipiwe

Peter Kubeke  
Tap Dancer  
Washington Xisolo  
Hostel Guard  
Frik Bezuidenhout  
Policeman  
Dean Stewardson  
Police Chief

Gustav Goldenhuys  
Policeman  
Gideon Moegi  
Mia Mpute  
Newspaper Sellers  
André Stoltz  
Magistrate

9,839 feet  
109 minutes

Johannesburg, 1985. Three newly graduated young women, two white, one black, pose on the University steps for photographs. They come from widely divergent backgrounds: Sophie is a wealthy white from the world of suburban pools and black servants; Thoko is from a poor rural Zulu township; and Aninka is a working-class Afrikaner from the 'white trash' racist heartland. Four years later, Sophie, Thoko and Aninka share a chaotic old house. Sophie is now a librarian by profession but a political activist by conviction, Thoko a schoolteacher and Aninka an archaeologist on the eve of her wedding.

This life comes to an end with Aninka's marriage. The wedding is celebrated in her family backyard, now her uncle's used car lot. Thoko is the only black person there and is treated like an intruder by the Afrikaner relatives. Sophie, in Thoko's defence, kicks a drunken guest who has been pestering her, and they both leave.

The wedding plunges Sophie into a phase of depressive reminiscence about her own failed marriage to Jeremy, a former soldier. Sophie's defiance against the regime that has privileged her spurs her to acts of terrorism; but after she has planted a bomb in an airport, which kills two civilians, she cracks up and goes on the run once again, first to her parents and then back to Jeremy. Finally she returns to her friends, only to find that their old house is also now occupied by Aninka's husband, who discovers her explosives and confronts Sophie with the evidence. Unable to handle the guilt, Sophie hands herself in to the police.

Her arrest precipitates both her own emotional collapse, and the disintegration of the life which has built up around her. While Sophie is in prison, her parents accuse Thoko of planting evil ideas in their daughter's head, and Thoko in turn fights with Aninka. The two friends then retreat into their separate worlds, Aninka paying a surprise visit to her uncle, and Thoko returning to the Alexandria hostel where she finds her black friends and family.

On the township radio, the news of Nelson Mandela's release from prison in early 1990 is announced, prompting the regrouping of the threatened far right and the burning of Thoko's township by other blacks. At this moment of greatest political tension, the friends reunite. Aninka, having witnessed her uncle's public identification with the swastika flag of the Afrikaner extremists, goes in search of Thoko, and Sophie is released from jail. She too migrates to the charred township, and the three friends are once more together.

In the uneasy aftermath of the explosion which Sophie has caused, she spends an evening in a black township with her fellow activists. They are her political allies, but Sophie is gauche, frightened and alienated from them, an outsider peeking in at a gathering she cannot join. Self-consciously she admits, "I feel very white." Sophie's whiteness is the perpetual source of her despair. Her fragile identity is held in place through the first part of *Friends* by the need to be associated with blackness through her acts of terrorism; but it later crumples with the painful recognition that her whiteness won't go away.

It is through the urgency of Sophie's dream to be assimilated by the black community that Elaine Proctor conveys the divisiveness of 1980s South African society. Sophie has never disclosed her activism to either Thoko or Aninka and, on the night of the airport bomb, she tiptoes fearfully into her own house, somehow convinced that her guilt is indelibly branded on her forehead. She slips into Thoko's bed and touches the flesh of her sleeping friend's back. In her desire to acquire blackness, Sophie eroticises it, confusing the colour of black flesh with the political oppression it represents to her guilty whiteness. *Friends* does not retreat from the political and emotional complexity which makes up the white liberal: the all-consuming and painful self-awareness that is present in Sophie's obsession with cleansing whilst in captivity.

Sophie is overwhelmed, almost to suicide, by the very allure of political oppression. In prison she is dragged by the guards along the floor towards the interrogation cell, an act of brutality intercut with the vivid childhood memory of her family's black maid being wrenched away and beaten by the police for her ANC activities. In a confused way Sophie seeks solidarity by trying to emulate the black experience, and the maid's blood dripping onto her own diminutive white hands is construed as symbolic of a primal link between herself and black oppression. This is not empathy but obsessiveness. When the prison guard throws Sophie her clothes and announces that she is free to go, she cries. But the tears don't stem from simple relief; rather, they hint at a self-flagellating recognition that she cannot flee the safety of her white person's identity and privilege.

*Friends* is a jigsaw, deftly fitting together pieces of personal and political lives into a vivid and complex picture of South Africa in the 80s. Sophie is the linchpin around whom the others hover and react, but Elaine Proctor's parable eschews the simple option of rendering just one woman's story. Much of the film is imbued with subtle, intensely personal images that link the lives of the three friends to the turbulent political backdrop leading up to the watershed of Nelson Mandela's release. Thoko's final rejection of black friendship, her acknowledgement to Aninka of "what it costs me to be your





Steam spirit: Michele Burgers, Kerry Fox, Dambisa Kente

friend and hers" and the awakening of her separatist black defiance is signalled by the one stark gesture of ramming her clenched fist into the cake that Sophie's parents have made for tea. Similarly Aninka's unchaining of her uncle's second-hand cars after she has heard him speak at a neo-Nazi rally is her own anarchic way of gesturing her rejection of the Afrikaner order. Such images of disintegration and action keep the world inhabited by the three women from seeming too nice, too severed from the explosions and the news bulletins, too able to retreat from the intrusive world around them.

*Friends* is a portrait of the overwhelming loneliness each isolated individual feels as the three women search for common ground. The 80s are shown to be years of confusion, a self-inflicted wasteland rather like the razed, traumatised garden created by Aninka and her husband at the back of the friends' house. The disparate narrative and political strands are loosely drawn together when the news of Mandela's release breaks on the radio. Elaine Proctor herself is from an enlightened Afrikaner family whose father was the pathologist brought in to examine Steve Biko's body on behalf of the Biko family after his murder.

South Africa has only embarked on its journey towards free elections, but one can't help feel that in Biko's time, the final tentative optimism expressed at the end of *Friends* would have been falsifying or unthinkable. This hopefulness is not to be confused with the exultation of the white experience in a faint-hearted liberal film like *Cry Freedom*. The three friends do indeed find some common ground, but in the South Africa of the 90s, this common ground is the black land around the burnt township of Alexandria.

Sophie, Thoko and Aninka are brought together, their last embrace echoing the time when just before Aninka's wedding, the three lay half naked in a steam room, staring wistfully at the ceiling. Both the friendship and the politics have come a long way. Biko once spoke of a time in the future when blacks would be able to invite whites to share their table on their terms, rather than assuming they had a rightful place there. For most of *Friends*, politics had been defined through Sophie's near-suicidal guilt; now finally they are defined through Thoko's black consciousness. The whites have been allowed back – but on Thoko's terms.

**Stella Bruzzi**

## The Good Son

USA 1993

Director: Joseph Ruben

### Certificate

Not yet issued

### Distributor

20th Century Fox

### Production Company

20th Century Fox

### Executive Producers

Ezra Swerdlow

Daniel Rogosin

### Producers

Mary Anne Page

Joseph Ruben

### Co-producer

Michael Steele

### Production Co-ordinators

Leigh Miller

Minnesota:

Dorothy Aufiero

### Unit Production Manager

Thomas Kane

### Location Managers

Michael Williams

Las Vegas:

Gary Stanek

### 2nd Unit Director

Jack Gill

### Casting

Deborah Aquila

Associate:

Jane Shannon

Boston:

Collinge/Pickman

### Assistant Directors

Michael Steele

Barbara Ravis

Steve Davis

2nd Unit:

K.C. Colwell

### Screenplay

Ian McEwan

### Director of Photography

John Lindley

Panavision

### Colour

DeLuxe

### 2nd Unit Director of Photography

Ken Zunder

### Camera Operators

Peter Norman

### Aerial:

Roger Vernon

### Steadicam Operators

David Crone

Larry McConkey

### Editor

George Bowers

### Production Designer

Bill Groom

### Art Director

Rusty Smith

### Art Department Co-ordinator

Laurel Harris

### Set Decorator

George DeTitta Jr

### Set Dressers

Tempest S. Farley

Ray Fisher

Arthur Pottie

Paul Richards

Bob Schnieg

Donald Wilson

Peter Nauyokas

### Lead Scenic

Roland Brooks

### Master Scenic Artist

Bob Topol

### Storyboard Artist

Len Morganti

### Special Effects Co-ordinator

Neil Trifunovich

### Music

Elmer Bernstein

### Orchestrations

Emilie A. Bernstein

### Supervising Music Editor

Kathy Durning

### Costume Design

Cynthia Flynt

### Wardrobe Supervisor

Elizabeth Feldbauer

### Make-up Artist

Bernadette Mazur

### Hairstylist

Francesca Paris

### Titles/Opticals

Jerry Siegel

Eastern Optical EFX

### Supervising Sound Editor

Stan Bochner

### Sound Editors

Richard P. Cirincione

Lou Cerborino

Stuart Emanuel

Bitty O'Sullivan-Smith

Ira Spiegel

Stuart Stanley

### Supervising ADR Editor

Harriet Fidlow

### ADR Editor

Marjorie Deutsch

### Foley Supervisor

Elisha Birnbaum

### Sound Recordists

Susumu Tokunow

### Music:

Dan Wallin

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recorder

Tom Fleischman

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Jack Gill

### Aerial Supervisors

John Thomas

Mike Weis

### Aerial Co-ordinator

Earl Wiggins

### Stunts

Joni Avery

Rick Avery

Gregory J. Barnett

Kenny Bates

Nick Brett

Mike Cassidy

Edward Conna

Christopher Epper

Glory Fioramonti

Debbie Greg

Gene Harrison

Henry Kingi

Noon Orsatti

Spiro Razatos

### Aerial/Cliff:

Mickey Cassidy

Larry Nicholas

Kristy McGill

### Ice Skating:

Colette Irving

Eli Irving

### Swimming:

Ashleigh Powell

Debbie Carrington

### Animal Wranglers

Anne Gordon

Diane Jessup

### Cast

Macaulay Culkin

Henry Evans

Elijah Wood

Mark Evans

Wendy Crewson

Susan Evans

David Morse

Jack Evans

Daniel Hugh Kelly

Wallace Evans

Jacqueline Brookes

Alice Davenport

Quinn Culkin

Connie Evans

Ashley Crow

Janice

Guy Strauss

Arizona Doctor

Keith Brava

Doctor in Blackport

Jerome Goodwin

Factory Worker

Andria Hall

Reporter

Bobby Huber

Axe Man

Mark Stefaniuk

Ice Man

Susan Hopper

Woman at Rescue

Rory Culkin

Richard in Picture

7,830 feet

87 minutes

After his mother dies, ten year-old Mark Evans is sent to New England to stay with his aunt and uncle and their two children – Henry, who is about Mark's age, and his little sister Connie – while his father goes away on a business trip. Mark's aunt Susan is still mourning for her youngest child Richard, who died in a bathtub accident some time ago.

At first, Mark and Henry have fun playing together. However, Mark gradually realizes that despite his innocent guise in front of grown-ups, Henry is violent, vicious and frighteningly amoral. Mark becomes complicit in an escalating series of Henry's cruel pranks, from smashing windows to killing a local dog, and finally causing a major road accident with a stuffed dummy thrown from a bridge. When Mark threatens to expose him, Henry attempts to kill Connie by contriving an accident while skating, but she is narrowly rescued. Mark tells Henry's mother what has been going on, but she attributes his seemingly irrational behaviour to grief at his mother's death. After fighting with Henry, Mark is confined to the house.

Meanwhile, Susan investigates Henry's secret shed and finds evidence which supports Mark's accusations. She and Henry go for a walk, during which she openly asks if he killed Richard. He admits his guilt, but runs away, apparently upset. Susan follows him to a cliffside, where he pushes her off. Mark, who has broken out of the house, wrestles with Henry on the precipice. Susan crawls back up onto the ledge and catches each boy by a hand, just as they fall off the edge. Able to save only one, she chooses Mark, despite Henry's glib appeals to mother love, and drops her son onto the fatal rocks below.

Based on a screenplay by Ian McEwan, *The Good Son* is bound to suffer from routine comparisons with the recent cinematic adaptation of his first novel, *The Cement Garden*. Against the latter's edgily English treatment of incest, all look-at-me camerawork and startling editing, *The Good Son* looks far too Hollywood-slick, a bog-standard thriller which everyone, especially McEwan, probably did only for the money. In fact, though by no means excellent, it is in many ways the more interesting film. While *The Cement Garden* peddles grotesquerie and prurience, like an adolescent eager to shock its parents, *The Good Son* is a more mature, yet ultimately more subversive movie, asking more difficult questions about childhood and familial love. If this film were a teenager, it would be one who always did his homework, never pranged the family car, and then one day quietly shot everyone with a rifle made in his metalwork class.

Which is precisely the kind of child that Macaulay Culkin plays in it – a cherub who, without much of a cause, is ruthlessly malevolent, a Charles Manson in size four Reeboks. As with his recent fiction, McEwan's script here is portentously concerned with the ►





**Beyond brathood: Macaulay Culkin**

◀ **Nature of Evil.** This Manichean perspective works better in the chiaroscuro world of the thriller film than it does in his pretentious attempts at the Novel of Ideas. The film offers a range of optional explanations of Henry's psychopathology – sibling rivalry, the corrupting violence of video games and horror movies – but in the end, Henry's taste for violence is ultimately inexplicable. Like the eponymous anti-heroine in Maxwell Anderson's play, which *The Good Son* recalls in theme as well as details, Henry is also simply a 'bad seed'.

It's an unfashionable conclusion for the mainstream cinema, which usually prefers behaviouralist explanations for all aberrations from normality, like the psychiatrist's remarks at the end of *Psycho*. If anything, the film suggests that Henry is but an extreme manifestation of the cruelty inherent in all children, a point clunkingly underscored when he and Mark wear identical masks. Unlike Kit Culkin, Macaulay's own father and manager, the parents here are hardly to blame, being simply as blinded as the rest of us by the dazzling ideology of childhood innocence. Like the numerous shots of children behind windows, and at one point clear ice, our perception of childhood is always filtered. The shock ending, with Wendy Crewson setting the ultimate example of Tough Love, is perhaps so satisfying because it taps adults' own unspeakable feelings of hatred towards their progeny.

Never have I seen the death of a character applauded so heartily by an audience, as when Macaulay Culkin plummets to his death in this film. No doubt this was more an indication of their aversion to the actor than their engagement with the story. Nonetheless, the casting of Mac as the baddie is thought-provoking for several reasons. Firstly, laying his performance against Elijah Wood's excellent one as Mark makes it apparent what a mediocre actor Mac is. Henry hardly seems to differ from Kevin in the *Home Alone* films – voice flat, gestures precocious, presence annoying. But this has the remarkable effect of illustrating how similar this film and the other pair really are. Just as in *Home Alone*, Mac's character uses his devious imagination to play tricks and defend himself, only here the result is real injury rather than slapstick. In all three films, Mac is a cute, sadistic, irritating little bastard who deserves to die; in *The Good Son* he finally does. Parents and disgruntled babysitters everywhere will applaud.

**Leslie Felperin Sharman**

## Guilty as Sin

**USA 1993**

**Director: Sidney Lumet**

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Buena Vista

### Production Company

Hollywood Pictures

### Executive Producers

Don Carmody

Bob Robinson

### Producer

Martin Ransohoff

### Associate Producers

Lilith Jacobs

Jolene Moroney

### Production Supervisor

Cindy Morton

### Production Manager

Joyce Kozy King

### Location Manager

Beth Boigon

### Casting

Lynn Stalmaster

### Canada:

Stuart Atkins

### Assistant Directors

Martin Walters

Tom Quinn

Megan Banning

### Screenplay

Larry Cohen

### Director of Photography

Andrzej Bartkowiak

### In colour

Prints by

Technicolor

### Camera Operator

David Crone

### Opticals

The Effects House

### Editor

Evan Lottman

### Production Designer

Philip Rosenberg

### Set Decorator

Enrico Campana

### Set Dresser

Bill Wood

### Scenic Artist

Guenter Bartlik

### Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Martin Malivoire

### Music

Howard Shore

### Music Editor

Suki Buchman

### Costume Design

Gary Jones

### Make-up Artists

Patricia Green

Ann Lee Masterson

Jay Cannistracci

### Title Design

Bran Ferren

### Supervising Sound Editor

Ron Bochar

### Sound Editor

Fred Rosenberg

### ADR Editor

Jane McCulley

### Foley Editors

Bruce Pross

Frank Kern

Steve Visscher

### Sound Recordist

Bruce Carwardine

### Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordist

Richard Portman

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Dwayne McLean

### Stunts

Shelly Cook

Jaime Jones

Mark Brunzell

### Cast

Rebecca De Mornay

Jennifer Haines

Don Johnson

David Greenhill

Stephen Lang

Phil Garson

Jack Warden

Moe Plimpton

Dana Ivey

Judge Tompkins

Ron White

Diangelo

Norma Dell'Agnese

Emily

Sean McCann

Nolan

Luis Guzman

Lieutenant Bernard

Martinez

Robert Kennedy

Caniff

James Blundick

McMartin

Tom Butler

Heath

Christina Baren

Miriam Langford

Lynne Cormack

Esther Rothman

Barbara Eve Harris

Kathleen Bigelow

Simon Sinn

Mr Loo

John Kapelos

Ed Lombardo

Tom McCamus

Ray Schiff

Harvey Atkin

Judge Steinberg

Anthony Sherwood

Ken Powell

Chris Benson

Arraignment Judge

Melanie Nicholas-King

Receptionist

Johnie Chase

Clerk

Bright Wilson

Rita Greenhill

Alberto de Rosa

Plasterer

Yanira Contreras

Woman at Cleaners

Shelley Young

Woman at Supper Club

Sandi Ross

Postal Supervisor

Peter Blais

Handwriting Expert

Denis Akiyama

Lab Technician

LJM Franks

Nurse

Roland Rothchild

Intern

Jack Newman

Jury Foreman

Gene Mack

Security Guard

Tom Quinn

Squash Player

9,650 feet

107 minutes

in need of a brilliant attorney to help prove his innocence. Claiming to be unimpressed by his blatant tactics of charm and flattery, Jennifer turns him over to the law, but quickly has second thoughts: persuading herself that this is a case which could further enhance her reputation, she agrees to represent him. She realises her mistake almost immediately: the ruthlessly manipulative David attempts to alienate her boyfriend Phil with hints that Jennifer has fallen for him, and infuriates the rich benefactress who has been paying his bills. Jennifer tries to drop the case but her petition to the court is refused and she finds herself trapped.

Making himself increasingly at home in her office, and openly claiming that she has seduced him, David admits to her that he has disposed of a number of past wives, knowing that she will be unable to divulge this privileged information. Desperate, she turns for guidance to her friend, veteran private investigator Moe Plimpton, who agrees to delve into David's past. As the trial begins, Jennifer is convinced that her life is in danger as David might decide at any time that she knows too much. The case against him depends on whether he could have been in the building when his wife fell from a window, and whether a letter accusing him of intent to murder, sent from his wife to the police, is authentic. Experts pronounce the letter a fake, but Jennifer, investigating the building, realises that David could have disguised himself as a workman in order to enter and leave unobserved. Buying overalls and other painting gear, she arranges for them to be discovered as incriminating evidence.

Seeing through Jennifer's trick and learning of Moe's investigations, David beats up Phil as a warning. He also produces an alibi: the attractive Mrs Bigelow confirms that he was with her and that, in full painting gear, he helped to redecorate her apartment. The jury is out for a week, but fails to agree on a verdict. The case is dismissed, and in the empty courtroom David tells Jennifer how, on first seeing her, he worked out how his wife's murder could be made to appear the result of their joint planning. Scared but furious, Jennifer decides to take Moe's file on David to the State Attorney's Office, regardless of the risk to her career. But before Moe can copy it for her he is visited by David, and both Moe and the file go up in flames. Intercepting Jennifer on her way to rejoin Phil, David attempts to push her over a balcony, but she drags him with her. David is killed by the fall, but Jennifer lands on top of him and survives.

With its immaculate villain, its culpable (and blonde) heroine, and its ambivalence towards the efficient workings of the law, Larry Cohen's screenplay evokes the kind of thriller that Hitchcock would have enjoyed, something along the lines of a high-gloss *Shadow of a Doubt*, with innocence and guilt in turbulent complicity. Unexpected as it is to find the mav-

erick Cohen in such fine-trimmed territory, one might concede that many of his characters – the Invaders of the 60s TV series, say, or the small-time con-man of *Q: The Winged Serpent* – occupy a Hitchcockian shadowland where bravado is the only defence against an inevitable retribution. In *Guilty as Sin* the hunt for punishment continues: the arrogant lawyer pays for achieving the release of one obvious crook by submitting to the clutches of another. In turn, the client plans ever riskier crimes that bring him closer to his downfall. He eventually topples, in the tradition of Hitchcock's lost souls, from a vertiginous height.

Cohen's parables tend appealingly towards the overheated, and *Guilty as Sin* bubbles with notions to spice up the main ingredients. It is a cheerful irony, for instance, that after manipulating the legal system to suit herself Jennifer is drawn into a predicament where justice depends on her own law-breaking – and even then lets her down. Introducing the wondrous Mrs Bigelow as if in supernatural intervention to provide an inexplicable alibi, Cohen invalidates the entire trial by wrapping an intertitle over a week of deliberation by the jury, finally dismissed for being unable to make up its mind and charmingly thanked by the defendant in person. Formerly self-confident and proud of it, Jennifer has by this time discovered in the urbanely subversive ladykiller – to whom she succumbs with every glance – an alter ego who has already rewritten her past and infected her future. Committed to his defence, which with simple, demonic accuracy is that women behave irrationally when he's around, she must logically fall with him when, like the rest of his victims, she is forced into an assisted suicide. The film's concluding image should have been of the two of them, jointly destroyed, but in deference to the upbeat, the lady is scraped decorously off the floor. Her compliant and long-suffering boyfriend, perhaps foreseeing the possibility of a more balanced partnership, reassures her with a profoundly ignorant "You're gonna be fine, darling". We're not likely to believe that, either.

Left to his own devices, Cohen could have been expected to film all this with a vibrant delirium, but with Sidney Lumet at the helm the production becomes, despite itself, a class act. Curiously uncritical of the story's absurdi-



**Jagged evidence: De Mornay, Johnson**



ties which, if presented with energy and pace, might just about pass muster, Lumet's serene style achieves the paraphrase of Hitchcockian elegance while never quite mastering the art of divine intervention. A number of suspense scenes clearly invite editing in the manner of the dropped-shoe sequence in *Marnie* – the furtive investigation of a locker just as its owner is returning from the squash court, the scraping together of evidence in a bedroom as the butler prepares to emerge from the kitchen. But Lumet is as always more interested in immediacy than in anticipation, and persistently undercuts the tension as if recognising its irrelevance. When the villain brandishes a knife while carefully preparing a sandwich, the only blood he sheds is his own; and when he confesses his wrongdoings into a microphone in an empty courtroom the door crashes open to reveal not an accusing horde but a solitary cleaning trolley. Lumet's soundtrack assails us with such crashes, echoing the judge's gavel in the opening scene; sadly, they soon begin to sound like attempts to keep us awake.

A primary weakness is the casting of Rebecca De Mornay in a role that demands another Barbara Stanwyck or at least an Angie Dickinson – someone capable of delivering her lines with enough parodic edge to bring them to life. Hampered by her cradle-rocking image of instability, De Mornay comes across more as petulant teenager than as seasoned courtroom fighter, and at first ogle from the shameless Don Johnson she is gone with a gulp. Hugely enjoying himself, Johnson plays monster with ingratiating transparency, fooling nobody but his rich and shark-like admirers who all look as if they could snarl more effectively in any court than his tremulous defence attorney. Shrugging away these clownish figures, Lumet employs his usual team, Bartkowiak (camera) and Rosenberg (designer), to explore a more personal geometry. Where *The Verdict* was constructed visually from an intricate series of boxes, and *The Morning After* was portrayed in a succession of horizontal bands of colour, *Guilty as Sin* concentrates on vertical perspectives befitting its multiple falls from grace. From the beautifully graded columns of beige provided by the walls of the Greenhill apartment to the varied staircases that seem to trap their users in cages of steel and glass, the film is a frustrating combination of the exquisite and the banal, of opportunities transcended or briskly overlooked. Offsetting the superb shot of the grieving heroine alone on a black screen – which reminds us that Lumet's most consistent theme is that of remorse – there are too many malevolent camera movements leading nowhere and too many jarring interpolations like the workman who, for a couple of flash shots, suddenly turns into Don Johnson. With story and style in such a state of collision, *Guilty as Sin* itself hovers in free fall, lost for a parachute.

Philip Strick

## Innocent Moves

USA 1993

Director: Steven Zaillian

### Certificate

PG

### Distributor

UIP

### Production Company

Paramount Pictures

### Executive Producer

Sydney Pollack

### Producers

Scott Rudin

William Horberg

### Co-producer

David Wisniewitz

### Production Co-ordinators

Mara McSweeney

New York:

Alexis Alexanian

### Unit Production Managers

David Coatsworth

Jonathan Filley

### Location Managers

Fred Kamping

New York:

Daniel Strol

### Casting

Avy Kaufman

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Associate:

Michele Heilbrun

Toronto:

Tina Gerussi

### Assistant Directors

Tony Gittelson

Burt Harris

Walter J. Gasparovic

Rose Tedesco

Grant Lucibello

New York:

Julie A. Bloom

Juan Ros

### Screenplay

Steven Zaillian

Based on the novel

by Fred Waitzkin

### Director of Photography

Conrad L. Hall

In colour

prints by Deluxe

### Additional Photography

Robert Hahn

### Camera Operators

Robert Hahn

B Camera:

Harald Ortenburger

New York B Camera:

Tom Priestley

### Steadicam Operators

David Crone

Rick Raphael

### Video Playback Operators

Stephen Sebert

David J. Woods

New York:

Nils Johnson

### Editor

Wayne Wahrman

### Co-editor

Ronald Roose

### Production Designer

David Gropman

### Art Directors

Gregory P. Keen

New York:

Daniel Davis

### Set Decorators

Steve Shewchuk

New York:

Christopher Maya

### Set Dressers

Denis Kirkham

Bill Woods

New York:

Dan Grosso

### Draftsman

Douglas McLean

### Head Scenic Artist

Guenter Bartlik

### Special Effects

Bob Hall

### Music

James Horner

### Conductor

James Horner

### Music Extracts

"Salsa #3" by John E.

Oliver, Lou Forestieri:

"Saxophone Concerto"

by John Debney

### Orchestrations

Thomas Pasatieri

### Music Editor

Jim Henrikson

### Songs

"Rough Enough"

by and performed

by Freddie Foxxx;

"Green Grass That

Grows All Around"

performed by Pete

Seeger; "All Things

Considered Theme

Music" by Donald

Voegeli; "Enough is

Enough" by Anthony

Criss, Keir Gist,

Vincent Brown,

A. Bahr, J. Ray,

performed by Rottin

Razkals; "Heart and

Soul" by Hoagy

Carmichael, Frank

Loesser

### Costume Design

Julie Weiss

### Wardrobe

Kim Chow

New York:

Walter Rivera

Rose Cuervo

### Make-up Artists

Linda Gill

New York:

Paul Gebbia

### Hair Stylists

Paul Elliot

New York:

Bill Farley

### Title Design

Robert Dawson

### Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

### Supervising Sound Editor

Beth Sterner

### Dialogue Editors

Bobby Mackston

Michael Magill

### Supervising ADR Editor

Nick Korda

### ADR Editor

Norto Sepulveda

### Supervising Foley Editor

Scott Jackson

### Foley Editors

Leslie Gaulin

Pat Bietz

### Sound Recordists

David Lee

ADR:

Bob Baron

Foley:

Eric Gotthelf

Music:

Shawn Murphy

New York:

Dennis Maitland

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Gary Bourgeois

Scott Millan

Elmo Ponsdomenech

### Sound Effects Editors

Thierry Couturier

Richard Burton

Kim Secrist

Noah Blough

### Foley Artists

Catherine Rowe

James Moriana

Joan Rowe

### Technical Advisor

Bruce Pandolfini

### Cast

Max Pomeranc

Josh Waitzkin

Joe Mantegna

Fred Waitzkin

Joan Allen

Bonnie Waitzkin

### Jon Kingsley

Bruce Pandolfini

Laurence Fishburne

Vinnie

Michael Hirenberg

Jonathan Poe

Robert Stephens

Poe's Teacher

David Paymer

Kalev

Hal Scardino

Morgan

Vasek Simex

Russian Park Player

William H. Macy

Tunafish Father

Dan Hedaya

Tournament Director

Laura Linney

School Teacher

Anthony Heald

Fighting Parent

Steven Randazzo

Man of Many Signals

Chelsea Moore

Katya Waitzkin

Josh Mostel

Josh Karmelblith

Chess Club Regulars

Tony Shalhoub

Chess Club Member

Austin Pendleton

Asa Hoffman

Tom McGowan

Ona Fletcher

Reporters

Kamran Shirazi

Himself

Joel Benjamin

Himself

Roman Dzindzichavili

Himself

Jerry Poe McClinton

Park Player

### Matt De Matt Reines

Night Park Player

Vincent Smith

Jerry Rakow

Washington Square

Patzers

William Colgate

Statistician

Tony De Santis

Journalist

R.D. Reid

Final Tournament

Director

Anthony McGowan

Park Dealer

Katya Waitzkin

82nd Girl

Ryder Fleming-Jones

Petey

Harris Krotchick

Running Chess Kid

John Bourgeois

Maria Ricossa

Gym Parents

Caroline Yeager

Screaming Mom

Andrew Sardella

Josh's Syracuse

Opponent

Nathan Carter

Josh's Teammate

Nicholas Taylor

Jonathan Fazio

Nicky Mellina

Philip Neiman

Elizabeth Gropman

Birthday Friends

9,916 feet

110 minutes

US title: Searching for

Bobby Fischer

Seven-year-old Josh Waitzkin is fascinated by the wayward career of American chess champion Bobby Fischer. His sports journalist father Fred and mother Bonnie are amazed to discover that, from a few brief but intense visits to the speed chess players in Central Park – a collection of drop-outs and drug users – their son appears to have taught himself the game.

Bonnie allows him to become a regular partner of Vinnie, a black down-and-out, while Fred seeks out former champion player Bruce Pandolfini to teach his son. Initially, Bruce turns Josh down but when he sees the boy's playing style, he agrees. Regular lessons enable Josh to participate in the junior chess tournament circuit. His rating steadily improves, but his absence from school leads to a showdown with his unsympathetic teacher.

With Bonnie's reluctant agreement, the Waitzkins place Josh in a private school. Meanwhile Josh has become friends with Morgan, a regular sparring partner. Bruce is approached by the trainer of another rising chess star,

Jonathan Poe – a boy who devotes



◀ when he suggests that there may be room on his top bunk for Vinnie. She is vindicated when Josh acts towards the losing Poe with genuine sportsmanship. Fred sees in his son an “ability to be better at something than I have ever been at anything in my life.” As played by the rumpled Joe Mantegna, he is an uncomplicated throwback to an earlier era (the shot of him at a baseball match is lit like a 40s film).

What is at issue is not so much the chess as the success. This implies both fear and hatred. Fred jollies his son along by explaining that he has no need to be afraid, that his opponents are all terrified of him, and it is taken as read that the other chess parents loathing for Fred increases with each move his son makes in rank. However, Josh's task is not simply to win, but rather to find correct or acceptable ways of doing so. Bruce Pandolfini and Jonathan Poe exemplify an old world elitism. Bruce exhorts his pupil to avoid the taint of the street and to hold his opponent in contempt. On the other hand there is Vinnie, the film's guarantor of ethnicity, egalitarianism, street cred and box office potential. It is Josh's task to keep his integrity (that 'good heart') and to reconcile the elitist search for excellence with the way of the street. It is not a matter of choice but of synthesis.

Overhanging the whole enterprise is the shadow of chess legend Bobby Fischer. Interestingly, we are not shown the source of Josh's idolisation. The film opens with news footage accompanied by Josh's lisping voice-over. There are several such sequences inserted into the film and each time they evoke the hero's renegade status and his skill at “beating the Russian” before vanishing once more from the public gaze. It is the over-riding need to find another Fischer, a new American hero, that obsesses and unites all the main characters, from the speed chess drop-outs, through the chess parents, to Poe. Josh himself remains a cypher for this need, to the extent that at times the film seems to stand on the edge of a different genre, that of horror and possession. After all, like Fischer, Josh “plays the game from the inside.”

America needs a new hero but it must be a certain kind of hero. Everything in the film takes a back seat to this concern – chess, the character of the child, and even the best efforts of such watchable performers as Mantegna and Ben Kingsley. The paradigm has been used by Hollywood before, but it is more familiar from films made under Stalin in the Soviet Union and Mao in China. Individual excellence is necessary, but it is to be tempered by the hero acknowledging the contribution of the very least in society and remaining willing to disappear among them, as Mao has it, like a fish into water – or indeed like Fischer himself, who returned to fight one last old enemy before vanishing mystically back among his countrymen. It is an odd ideological burden for a film like this to carry.

Verina Glaessner

King of the Hill			
USA 1993			
Director: Steven Soderbergh			
<b>Certificate</b>	12	<b>Key Hair Stylist</b>	Susan Mills
<b>Distributor</b>	UIP	<b>Title Graphic</b>	John McDougall
<b>Production Company</b>	Wildwood/Bona Fide For Gramercy Pictures	<b>Titles</b>	Title House Inc
<b>Executive Producer</b>	John Hardy	<b>Opticals</b>	Pacific Title and Art Studio
<b>Producers</b>	Barbara Maltby Albert Berger Ron Yerxa	<b>Supervising Sound Editor</b>	Larry Blake
<b>Production Co-ordinator</b>	Heather McGrath	<b>ADR</b>	Steve Alterman Charles Bartlett Megan Bell Kristina Carruth Judi Durand Jamie Gunderson Doris Hess Barbara Iley Carlyle King Josh Lindsay Phillip Lucier Gabriel Luque Christina MacGregor David McCharen Lindsay Parker Linda Phillips David Randolph Noreen Reardon
<b>Unit Manager</b>	Rick Cowan	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Paul Ledford Dave Moreno Matthew C. Beville Mark Coffey
<b>Unit Production Manager</b>	Georgia Kacandes	<b>Piano Music:</b>	Leanne Ungar
<b>Location Supervisor</b>	Paul Marcus	<b>Foley:</b>	Nerses Gezalyan
<b>Casting</b>	Deborah Aquila Associates: Jeff Block Jane Shannon Chicago Additional: Jane Alderman Casting Voice: Barbara Harris	<b>ADR:</b>	Greg Steele Dolby stereo Consultant: Steve F.B. Simerka- Smith
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Gregory Jacobs Allen Kupetsky Lynn K. D'Angona	<b>Sound Re-recordists</b>	Larry Blake
<b>Screenplay</b>	Steven Soderbergh Based on the memoir by A.E. Hotchner	<b>Foley:</b>	Jim Ashwill
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Elliot Davis	<b>ADR:</b>	Robert Deschaine Charleen Richards
<b>Colour</b>	Deluxe prints by Film House	<b>Sound Effects Editors</b>	Ron Bartlett David Whittaker
<b>Additional Photography</b>	Jan Kiesser	<b>Foley Artists</b>	Dan O'Connell Alicia Stevenson
<b>B Camera Operator</b>	John Nuler	<b>Stunt Co-ordinator</b>	Noon Orsatti
<b>Steadicam Operator</b>	John Nuler	<b>Stunts</b>	Bob Brown David Elliott Andy Gill Buck McDancer J.D. Streett IV Eddie Yansick
<b>Picture Editor</b>	Steven Soderbergh	<b>Bird Handlers</b>	Debi Baker Laura Haverstick Hollie Van Bergen- Baker
<b>Production Designer</b>	Gary Frutkoff	<b>Cast</b>	Jesse Bradford Aaron Kurlander Jeroen Krabbé Mr Kurlander Lisa Eichhorn Mrs Kurlander Karen Allen Miss Mathey Spalding Gray Mr Mungo Elizabeth McGovern Lydia Cameron Boyd Sullivan Adrien Brody Lester Joseph Chrest Ben John McConnell Patrolman Burns Amber Benson Ella McShane Kristin Griffith Mrs McShane
<b>Art Director</b>	Bill Rea		
<b>Art Department</b>			
<b>Co-ordinator</b>	Lisa L. Dennison		
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Claire Jenora Bowin		
<b>Set Dresser</b>	Matthew R. Altman Marty McManus Andy Amann Mike Bender Tim McDonald		
<b>Scenic Artists</b>			
<b>Key:</b>	John W. Snow		
<b>Lead:</b>	Craig Muzio Chris Barnes		
<b>Special Effects</b>			
<b>Co-ordinator</b>	J.D. Streett IV		
<b>Stage Miniature</b>	Roger Waterhouse		
<b>Music</b>	Cliff Martinez		
<b>Music Supervisor</b>	Jeffrey Kimball		
<b>Music Co-ordinator</b>	Kevin Frech		
<b>Costume Design</b>	Susan Lyall		
<b>Wardrobe Supervisor</b>	Laura Goldsmith Additional On-set: Eric Luebbert Laurie J. Trevethan Cricket Vandover Todd Thomas		
<b>Make-up Supervisor</b>	Elaine L. Offers Additional: Anna Cirronis		
<b>Hair Design</b>	Laura Connolly		

<b>Chris Samples</b> Billy Thompson <b>Peggy Friesen</b> Mrs Thompson <b>Katherine Heigl</b> Christina Sebastian <b>John Durbin</b> Mr Sandoz <b>Lauryn Hill</b> Elevator Operator <b>Jesse Zeigler</b> Jealous Kid <b>Remak Ramsey</b> Principal Stellwater <b>Fred Cherrick</b> Woodbine Owner <b>Joseph Moynihan</b> Woodbine Waiter <b>Don Richard</b> Mr Farley <b>Mark Tokano</b> Mr Yamo	<b>Craig Hawkley</b> Golfer in Orange Pants <b>Aleed Rosser</b> Other Golfer <b>Jason Feiner</b> <b>Jared Joplin</b> Marble Bullies <b>David Jensen</b> Front Desk Clerk <b>Harry Governick</b> Second Policeman <b>Sarah Mermelstein</b> Girl At Graduation <b>Kimberly Jenkins</b> Girl At Party <b>Gabriel Levinson</b> Boy With Apple <b>Ron Yerxa</b> Donald Millee
	<b>9,256 feet</b> <b>103 minutes</b>

■ St Louis, 1933. Over-imaginative 12-year-old Aaron Kurlander lives with his salesman father, his nervously ill mother and his beloved younger brother Sullivan on a half-deserted floor of the run-down Empire Hotel. Times are tough. While Mr Kurlander works in vain selling door-to-door, Aaron divides his time between being a model school student, keeping an eye open for the repossession men who are after his father's car, and dodging the local flatfoot cop. Soon Aaron's father is forced to send Sullivan away to relatives. All the other residents of the Hotel floor are in similar straits, and Ben the bellhop operates a lock-out policy on those who fall too far behind with the rent.

Aaron's main scheme to help out his family – breeding canaries – turns out to be a flop. Then Mrs Kurlander's health breaks down and she is sent away to a sanatorium, just as her husband finally gets ■ new job selling watches out of state. Left alone to cope on no money with the responsibility of their threatened room, Aaron prepares for his graduation. Aaron's hustling street friend Lester helps him break into Ben's store of confiscated goods and they steal a smart outfit for the graduation. After the ceremony, in which he wins a prize, he is invited to a party by his rich classmate Christina Sebastian, but the extraordinary tales he tells the other children to cover up his family history are exposed and he runs away.

The hotel manager calls Aaron in for a final warning and so he appeals to his sleazy but friendly neighbour across the hall, Mr Mungo, for help. The half-drunk Mungo, embroiled with 'customer service' girl Lydia, promises to put the manager straight for him. Meanwhile Lester is arrested, but is allowed to give Aaron the knife which he uses to pick locks. When the boy returns, however, he realises that he is about to be locked out, so he shuts himself into his room. Later, looking through the window above his door, he sees a pool of blood seeping from Mungo's room. On investigation, he finds Mungo has slit his throat.

A letter written to the relatives brings Sullivan back, and shortly afterwards Mr Kurlander reappears, newly prosperous with a salary. He wants to just leave their belongings behind, but Aaron is determined that Ben should

not have them. He and Sullivan lower their stuff into the back alley on sheets tied together into ropes, and then he breaks into Ben's basement and steals all the keys from Ben's collection of padlocks. Finally the entire family are re-united at their huge new apartment house.

■ The career of Steven Soderbergh highlights the degree to which film reviewing in Britain has to take reputations on trust. All we have seen of his work in this country is his debut, the Cannes Palme d'Or winner *sex, lies and videotape*, which was greeted as a critical and popular triumph of economical film making. Yet Soderbergh's reputation is at a low ebb, simply because consensus has it that his follow-up – the reputedly bizarre and bigger-budgeted *Kafka* – is unreleasable. His third feature *King of the Hill* therefore has a lot riding on it, in that the former young upstart is perceived as needing a comeback to recoup his bankability.

That Soderbergh should choose perhaps the softest of film options – a rites-of-passage movie – might be an indication of just how badly he wants to be king of the hill again. This impression is amplified by the feeling that, in terms of emotional manipulation, the film is a world away from his impressive debut. Where *sex, lies and videotape* was all low-key sensitivity, its modish minimalism emphasising an atmosphere of high sexual anxiety that explicitly includes the audience as voyeur, *King of the Hill* is distanced by nostalgic high-density colour images borrowed from that treasure-house of 30s Americana, the painting of Norman Rockwell.

Such loving use of period charm is, in a Depression context, deeply ironic, although it does nothing to gainsay the sentimentality that is a given with films taking a child's point of view. Soderbergh, however, keeps his young actor Jesse Bradford on a limited diet of winning smiles, and the boy's voice-over, adapted from the memoir by Hemingway sidekick A.E. Hotchner, has a laconic matter-of-fact edge that keeps any incipient drappiness at bay.

However, the studied weirdness with which the adult characters are presented – reminiscent of that king of all children-in-peril films, *Night of the Hunter* – signals that Soderbergh is still anxious to appear the auteur, but in a way that fits too snugly into the American independent tradition. You get the feeling that the Empire Hotel may be one of a chain that includes the Earle in *Barton Fink* and the Arcade in *Mystery Train*. Take away its moody *mise en scène*, however, and *King of the Hill* is otherwise a purely conventional tale of a kid who wins through against the odds. It is curiously underwhelming despite its successful hallucinatory depiction of Aaron's perceptions. And maybe the one thing that it didn't need that it has in common with Soderbergh's debut is its deadpan sense that nothing really matters very much.

Nick James



# Mac

USA 1992

Director: John Turturro

<b>Certificate</b> 18	<b>Costume Design</b> Donna Zakowska
<b>Distributor</b> Entertainment	<b>Wardrobe Supervisor</b> Barbara Palmer
<b>Production Company</b> Macfilm Productions	<b>Make-up</b> Sharon Ilson
<b>Producers</b> Nancy Tenenbaum Brenda Goodman	<b>Hair</b> Ron Abrams
<b>Production Associate</b> Frank Ferro	<b>Titles/Opticals</b> R/Greenberg Associates
<b>Production Co-ordinator</b> Livia Perez-Borrero	<b>Supervising Sound Editor</b> Don Sable
<b>Production Manager</b> Alyssa Bezahler	<b>Sound Editors</b> Kevin Lee Fred Rosenberg
<b>Location Manager</b> Eddy Collyns	<b>ADR Editor</b> Deborah Wallace
<b>Post-production Supervisor</b> Michael Alden	<b>Sound Recordist</b> Billy Sorokin
<b>Castings</b> Todd Thaler	<b>Dolby stereo</b> Sound Re-recordist Dominick Tavella
<b>Assistant Directors</b> Steve Apicella M.J. April	<b>Foley Artists</b> Elisha Birnbaum Brian Vancho
<b>Screenplay</b> John Turturro Brandon Cole	<b>Sicilian Advisors</b> Anthony Provenzano Charles Cascio
<b>Director of Photography</b> Ron Fortunato	<b>Stunt Co-ordinator</b> Danny Aiello III
<b>Colour</b> Technicolor	<b>Stunts</b> Jery Hewitt Peter Bucossi
<b>Steadicam Operators</b> Kyle Rudolph Rick Raphael	<b>Stunt Double</b> David Lomax
<b>Editor</b> Michael Berenbaum	<b>Film Extracts</b> From Here to Eternity (1953)
<b>Production Designer</b> Robin Standefer	<b>Cast</b>
<b>Art Director</b> John Magoun	<b>John Turturro</b>
<b>Art Department Co-ordinator</b> Christine Horstmann	<b>Niccolo "Mac" Vitelli</b>
<b>Set Decorator</b> Amelia Battagilo	<b>Katherine Borowitz</b>
<b>Dresser</b> Joel Borkow	<b>Alice Vitelli</b>
<b>Scenic Artist</b> Warren Jorgensen	<b>Michael Badalucco</b>
<b>Storyboard Artist/Artwork</b> Ralph Turturro	<b>Vico Vitelli</b>
<b>Music</b> Richard Termini Vin Tese	<b>Carl Capotorto</b>
<b>Music Extract</b> "Di Quella pira" from "Il Trovatore" by Giuseppe Verdi performed by Enrico Caruso	<b>Bruno Vitelli</b>
<b>Music Editor</b> Todd Kasow	<b>Ellen Barkin</b>
<b>Songs</b> "Fascination" by F.D. Merchetti; "Mama" by Harold Barlow, Phil Brito, B. Cherubini; "Laura" by David Roskin, performed by Charlie Parker; "Just a Gigolo/I Ain't Got Nobody" by Irving Caesar, Leonetti Cascussi, Roger Graham, Spencer Williams, performed by Louis Prima; "Manteca" by Dizzy Gillespie, Walter Fuller, Chano Bozo, performed by Dizzy Gillespie; "The Lady in Red" by Mort Dixon, Allie Wrubel, performed by Xavier Cugat; "Mule Train" by Johnny Lange, Ny Heath, Fred Glickman, performed by Frankie Laine; "M'appari tuil amore" performed by Enrico Caruso; "Canto Siciliano" by James Palmeri	<b>Oona</b>
	<b>John Amos</b>
	<b>Nat</b>
	<b>Steven Randazzo</b>
	<b>Gus</b>
	<b>Olek Krupa</b>
	<b>Polowski</b>
	<b>Joe Paparone</b>
	<b>Papa</b>
	<b>Dennis Farina</b>
	<b>Mr Stunder</b>
	<b>Kelvin Lee</b>
	<b>Mrs Stunder</b>
	<b>Richard Spore</b>
	<b>Francis</b>
	<b>James Madia</b>
	<b>Young Mac</b>
	<b>Steph Lineburg</b>
	<b>Young Alice</b>
	<b>Herbert E. Woltz</b>
	<b>Auctioneer</b>
	<b>Stretch "Raul Mercad"</b>
	<b>Joe Brown</b>
	<b>Mike Starr</b>
	<b>Fireman</b>
	<b>Michael Glynn</b>
	<b>Bricklayer</b>
	<b>Harry Bugin</b>
	<b>Patient</b>
	<b>Angelo Florio</b>
	<b>Paulo Boy</b>
	<b>Anthony Alessandro</b>
	<b>Young Bricklayer</b>
	<b>Sander Tecszy</b>
	<b>Fat Joey</b>
	<b>Kent Broadhurst</b>
	<b>Mr Tobin</b>
	<b>Abe Altman</b>
	<b>Mr Deutscher</b>
	<b>Joseph Marino</b>
	<b>Joe the Plumber</b>
	<b>Joyce Haynes</b>
	<b>Bum</b>
	<b>Ruth Moleczech</b>
	<b>Burgess</b>
	<b>Shirley Stoler</b>
	<b>Customer</b>
	<b>Grammet</b>
	<b>Cook</b>

<b>Katherine Turturro</b>	<b>Mario Tediaco</b>
<b>Gus's Mum</b>	<b>Joe the Mule</b>
<b>Robert Prescie</b>	<b>Jared Matesky</b>
<b>Wounded Man</b>	<b>Junkman</b>
<b>Jeff Brown</b>	<b>Jason Duchin</b>
<b>Husband</b>	<b>Mental Patient</b>
<b>Aida Turturro</b>	<b>Morton Tenenbaum</b>
<b>Wife</b>	<b>Mr Deutscher's Friend</b>
<b>Amadeo Turturro</b>	<b>Nicholas Turturro</b>
<b>Child</b>	<b>Matthew Sussman</b>
<b>Patrick Pisano</b>	
<b>Young Vico</b>	<b>10,621 feet</b>
<b>Anthony Capotorto</b>	<b>118 minutes</b>
<b>Young Bruno</b>	
<b>Eiron Andola</b>	
<b>Mac's Son</b>	
<b>Judith Roberts</b>	
<b>Woman on Bus</b>	

Queens, New York, 1954. The three Vitelli brothers pay their respects to their dead father, laid out in his coffin. A fantasy scene follows in which the father sits up and complains about the quality of the coffin. The two oldest sons, Mac and Vito, work on a construction site, where Mac is regularly in battle with Polowski, the foreman: Mac believes in doing a job well, Polowski insists on cutting corners. The youngest son, Bruno, is at art college and the three still live in the family home with their mother.

Mac visits Alice, who has caught his eye. He reminds her of how, when he was a boy, Alice's father refused to pay for work his own father had done: this serves as his approach to a chat-up line. Bruno, his college term complete, joins his brothers on the site, and is soon caught up in a fight caused by Mac barking at another labourer for his carelessness. Differences settled, Mac determines to rebuild the frame of a house to his own standards. The three brothers are sacked, and Mac convinces the other two that they should set up a family business.

At a party for Bruno's graduation, while Oona - an artist's model with fanciful notions - wins centre stage, Mac and Alice drive to the land Mac intends to buy for the Vitellis' first construction project, a row of houses. Alice offers to contribute by giving Mac all of her savings. At the auction for the land, Polowski induces Mac into a bidding war, tricking him into agreeing to an absurdly inflated price; Mac

faints. Resting in hospital, however, he finds out that the sale has been made invalid by the city's hold on the land. Between arguing with other patients, Mac asks Alice to marry him, and she agrees.

Work begins on the land Mac eventually buys and, as boss, he makes sure everything meets his standards. He rarely rests, working on the accounts by night, and Alice has to fight for his attention. Things sour at the site: one of the labourers falls off a roof, and Mac finds Vito taking short cuts. As Mac pushes himself and the others still harder, Bruno tells him he's sick.

After Mac is again duped by Polowski - this time into giving him a key to one of the Vitelli houses, which he uses as a model to sell the houses he himself is building - Mac completes the sale of his row. His reputation growing, a second, larger project, is lined up. However, Bruno and Vito decide that they can no longer work with their brother and the three split bitterly. Mac is left alone muttering about having to do everything himself.

In a post-script, several years later, Mac takes his son along to visit the houses, and tells him that they date from a time when what mattered was the "doing".

John Turturro's debut as a director invites a critical language that fits with the subject matter. It is well crafted, carefully assembled, and never less than solid. If these virtues sometimes seem modest ones, that is also apt since Turturro, feeling his way behind the camera, does not over-reach. While this produces little that's forced or fake, it can result in stolid direction: a great deal happens in close-up, and encounters tend to involve the camera swivelling from one impassioned face to the other. Given the director, an 'actors' film' might seem an easy tag. But if by that we mean film using performance, particularly as shown in faces, as the principal carrier of emotion, then that's just what *Mac* is. As such, it is exemplary, with the acting uniformly excellent.

Turturro has been working on *Mac* (largely inspired by the experience of his immigrant father) since 1980, developing scenes in the theatre and refining the piece with actor friends, many of whom feature in the film's cast. This genesis might have contributed to what is so much of an ensemble piece that characters seem to queue up for their turn to shine. There are also plenty of opportunities for Turturro to perform signature routines: the bug-eyed, manic stare; the rigid limbs; the sudden explosion that comes from nowhere.

An actors' film, then, and also one with a pronounced theme: the value of good work, which Mac defends from the likes of Polowski, who advises that "business is better than work." For the former you need only your mouth. What's more, beauty costs, he says; ugly work is cheap. Arthur Miller's recent play, *The Last Yankee*, dealt with a similar subject, and the loss of the ability to make things (as opposed to talking them up) seems increasingly to be seen as a cause of social malaise. There is great scope for romance in such an analysis - particularly for American cinema, nurtured on the wilful hero - and it is to Turturro's credit that his focus is as much on obsession and the fall-out from Mac's ideals. The two brothers can switch off, Mac cannot. He is a martyr who sees everything in black and white and who is apt to make all disagreements into Biblical encounters.

The 'theme' is seldom obtrusive, embedded as it is in a light, humorous portrait of a carefully drawn time and place. If Turturro can be said to already show signs of a directorial style, it is in the way that he slips nicely from standard naturalistic drama into the exaggerated or the grotesque. Polowski is a demon we enjoy, whom we laugh with; while Oona, played by Ellen Barkin, is the Boho from hell, reciting free form poetry, covering herself in toast - the antithesis of the worker and a clever counter to the film's pull towards sentimentality.

Robert Yates



Family ties: Carl Capotorto, John Turturro, Michael Badalucco



# Menace II Society

USA 1993

**Directors:** The Hughes Brothers

**Certificate**  
18

**Distributor**  
First Independent

**Production Company**  
New Line Productions

**Executive Producer**  
Kevin Moreton

**Producer**  
Darin Scott

**Co-producers**  
The Hughes Brothers  
Tyger Williams

**Line Producer**  
Michael Bennett

**Production Controller**  
Paul Prokop

**Production Co-ordinator**  
Dana Williams

**Unit Production Manager**  
Leon Dudevoir

**Location Managers**  
Elisa Coleman  
Earl West

**Executive in charge of Post-production**  
Joe Fineman

**Post-production Supervisor**  
Pam Winn

**Casting**  
Tony Lee

**ADR Voice:**  
Barbara Harris

**Assistant Directors**  
Tyrone L. Mason  
Simone Farber  
Janice Arrington  
Evan Gilner

**Screenplay**  
Tyger Williams

**Story**  
Allen Hughes  
Albert Hughes

**Director of Photography**  
Tyger Williams

**Director of Photography**  
Lisa Rinzier

**Colour**  
Foto Kem

**Prints by**  
Film House

**Director of Aerial Photography**  
Jon Kranhouse

**2nd Unit Camera Operator**  
John Demps

**Steadicam Operators**  
David Emmerichs  
P. Scott Sakamoto  
David Luckenbach

**Editor**  
Christopher Koefoed

**Production Designer**  
Penny Barrett

**Set Decorator**  
Adel A. Mazen

**Set Dresser**  
Lisa Boutillier

**Storyboard Artist**  
Eric Ramsey

**Special Effects Supervisor**  
Frank Ceglia

**Music**  
QD III

**Music Performed by**  
Keyboards:  
Willie Z  
Stan 'the Guitar Man' Jones  
Gospel Organ:  
Harry Cohen

**Music Supervisors**  
Bonnie Greenberg  
Jill Meyers

**Music Editor**  
John La Salandra

**Songs**  
"Trigga Gots No Heart" by R.L. Green, S. Adams, M. Ogleton, performed by SPICE 1:  
"Streihit Up Menace" by A. Tyler, T. Allen, performed by MC Eiht:  
"Packin' a Gun" by A. Banks, S. Jordan, R. Gooden, performed by Ant Banks; "Lick

Dem Muthaphuckas" by L. DeChalus.  
D. Murphy, T. Perry, performed by Brand Nubian; "Slow Dance (Hey Mr. DJ)" Instrumental" by R. Kelly, T. Blatcher, M. Jefferson, "Honey Love", "Dedicated" by R. Kelly, performed by R. Kelly and Public Announcement;  
"Death Becomes You" by P. Phillips, C. Penn, T. Guest, K. Guest, performed by Pete Rock, CL Smooth;  
"Can't Fuck Wit' a Nigga" by D. Blake, R. Bacon, performed by DJ Quik; "Stop Lookin' at Me" by A. Sealy, J. Edwards, Q. Dillon, K. Elam, performed by The Cutthroats; "Kinda Like a Gangsta", "You've Been Played" by Smooth, C. Stokes, performed by Smooth;  
"All Over a Ho" by R. Thomas, G. Hutchison, J. Long, performed by Mz. Kilo; "Only the Strong Survive" by T. Shaw, A. Banks, R. Gooden, S. Jordan, M. Hampton, performed by Too Short; "Fly Away" by V. Herbert, K. Griffin, performed by Hi-Five; "Top of the World" by E. Wiggins, E. 'Kenya' Baker, F. Busby, performed by Kenya Gruv; "Atomic Dog" by George Clinton Jr, Gary M. Shider, David L. Spradley, performed by George Clinton; "Love and Happiness" by Al Green, Mabon Hodges, performed by Al Green; "Computer Love" by Roger Troutman, Larry Troutman, Shirley Murdock, performed by Zapp; "Dopeman (Remix)" by O'Shea Jackson, Andre Young, performed by N.W.A.; "Got to Give It Up" by and performed by Marvin Gaye; "For the Love of You (Part 1)" by the Isley Brothers, Chris Jasper, performed by the Isley Brothers; "Stay Strapped in South Central" by QD III, performed by Xavier, QD III; "Hot Wire Oldie" by QD III, performed by Teddy Miller, QD III; "Only the Strong Survive" by Kenneth Gamble, Jerry Butler, Leon Huff, performed by Jerry Butler

**Costume Design**  
Sylvia Vega-Vasquez

**Costume Supervisor**  
Guillermo Perez

**Make-up Artists/Hair Designers**  
Kim D. Davis  
Joanetta Stowers

**Titles/Opticals**  
Howard A. Anderson Co.

**Digital Sound Design**  
Harry 'Monster' Cohen

**Sound Supervisor**  
Steve 'Scarface' Williams

**Dialogue Editors**  
Cathie 'Loco' Speakman  
Jim 'Re Roc' Brookshire

**ADR Editor**  
Marc 'Da Chronic' Fishman

**Foley Editor**  
Ricardo 'C. Mac' Broadus

**Sound Recordists**  
Veda Campbell

**Music:**  
Alex Gordon  
Rob Chiarelli

**Foley Recordist**  
Brian 'Smokey' Geer

**Dolby stereo**  
Sound Re-recordists

**Ken '187' Teaney**  
Scott 'Scooby' Ganary  
Tony 'Lil Snoop' Sereno

**Sound Effects Editors**  
Tim 'Dope Jam' Gedemer  
Lance 'J. Roc' Brown  
David 'Ice-man' Farmer

**Additional Special Effects**  
Rap-bys  
Howard 'The Duke' Drossin

**Foley Artists**  
Vince 'OE' Nicastro  
Greg 'G. Stone' Barbanell

**Technical Advisor**  
Travis Turner

**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Osaun Elam

**Stunts**  
Bruce Barbour  
Roydon Clark  
Gregg Dandridge  
Greg Elam  
Kiante Elam  
George Fisher  
Bobby Hamilton Jr  
Richard Hancock  
Henry Masao King Jr  
Anthony T. Mason  
Jalon Raney  
Gilbert Rosales  
Thomas Rosales Jr  
Alphonse V. Walter  
Terrence Deon Walters  
Gene Williams  
Danny Wong

**Cast**  
Tyrin Turner  
Caine Lawson  
Jada Pinkett  
Ronnie  
Larenz Tate  
O-Dog  
Arnold Johnson  
Grandpapa  
MC Eiht  
A-Wax  
Marilyn Coleman  
Grandmama  
Vonte Sweet  
Sharif

Clifton Powell  
Chauncy  
Glenn Plummer  
Pernell  
Samuel L. Jackson  
Tat Lawson  
Charles S. Dutton  
Mr Butler  
Pooh Man  
Doc  
Julian Roy Dester  
Anthony  
June Kyoko Lu  
Grocery Store Woman  
Toshi Toda  
Grocery Store Man  
Anthony Johnson  
Tony  
Brandon Hammond  
Caine, age 5  
Reginald Ballard  
Clyde  
Khandi Alexander  
Karen Lawson  
Eugene Lee  
James Pickins Jr  
Men  
Nancy Cheryl Davis  
Teacher  
Safir  
Harold Lawson  
Ryan Williams  
Stacy  
Cynthia Cathom  
Jackee  
Garen Holman  
Junior  
Joy Matthews  
Nurse  
Todd Anthony Shaw  
Lew-Loc  
Christopher M. Brown  
Lloyd  
Stacy Arnold  
Deena  
Dwayne Barnes  
Basehead  
Dave Kirsch  
Insurance Man  
Alvin Meers  
K-9 Police Officer  
Robert R. Gonzales  
Car Dealer  
Martin Davis  
Car-jack Victim  
Erin Leshawn Wiley  
Ilena  
Charles J. Grube  
Officer Fassel  
Mike Kelly  
Officer Gadd  
Rolando Molina  
Clifton Gonzalez Gonzalez  
Tony Valentino  
Danny Villarreal  
VATOs  
Yo Yo  
Girl at Party  
Samuel Monroe Jr  
Ilena's Cousin

8,748 feet  
97 minutes



Gang awry: Tyrin Turner, Larenz Tate, MC Eiht

beer he dropped in the grocery store. The police treat the boys with as much brutality as the boys treat those around them. After a beating by the police, Caine ends up in hospital. A glimmer of hope appears when his girlfriend Ronnie announces that she has got a job in Atlanta and invites Caine to move there with her and her young son Anthony. Caine is visited by the cousin of another girl who accuses him of making her pregnant, and reacts by beating him up. Just as Caine and Ronnie are preparing to move out of town, with their friends' help, the cousin and his gang drive by, and Caine is cut down in a rain of bullets.

The emerging genre of black gang-crime cinema - with films like *Menace II Society* and its predecessor *Boyz n the Hood* - pushes the white film reviewer into a difficult corner. The genre forms part of an ongoing debate in the black community and among black scholars about the violent imagery of rap and the aggressive sexism of many of its best-known figures. But this debate is less easy to enter into for the critic looking at a single film - in particular one which self-consciously plays with the white genre of gangster cinema. Paul Gilroy has already taken Spike Lee to task for unproblematically representing male ghetto life while refusing the challenge of its genocidal capacity. Howard A. Baker has recognised in rap both this destructive desperation born out of racial injustice and also the addressing of white fears through the resurrection of what Foucault calls "subjugated knowledges". Parts of black youth culture do not just suggest sexual identities which remain outside the field of what white culture approves of, but actively, sometimes aggressively explore them.

*Menace II Society* transfers much of the lore of rap into a narrative of drugs, guns, gangs and girls in Watts, LA. But the soundtrack's pain and intensity, the complexity of its musical structure is undermined, if not destroyed, by the simplicity of the story, which is presented in the kind of celebratory rhetoric found only in the most violent of films. 'Simplicity' because, as the opening scene shows,

the boys are ruthless killers and in the end can only die as brutal a death as they have inflicted on their victims.

The film masquerades as realism in that its narrative reflects the extraordinarily high death rate among young African-American males. It also accurately portrays drug-dealing as part of the neighbourhood economy and crack as the currency for addictive highs and high-status cars. But *Boyz n the Hood* has already claimed this neo-realist label as its own. In *Menace II Society*, reality provides only an opportunity for thoughtless film-making which is nonetheless able to draw on and exploit those parts of the black experience which demand to be understood and changed.

Simply to say that the film is disturbing is to refuse its political and emotional impact. The boys, having shot the Korean couple, also make off with a video of the killing. They later watch it ritualistically with friends, drinking, smoking and relishing the spectacle. In every case, spiteful, meaningless violence is the response to some imagined insult to masculinity. O-Dog shoots down an addict who can only offer to "suck his dick" in exchange for a hit. The Korean woman brings about her own death by expressing sorrow for the boys' mothers.

None of the film's characters extends beyond the ghetto stereotypes of the heroin-addicted black mother, the single parent trying against the odds to do the best for her young son (who is already fascinated by the guns and the exploits of older males) and the God-fearing grandparents locked in the misery of their surroundings. In the absence of major social change it is too easy to believe simplistically, as *Menace II Society* does, in education as the way out. Even if Caine wanted to go to college, he is taking too many drugs to open a book and has too many friends who would ridicule such aspirations. Even if the college doors were flung open to these disaffected youths, there is too much poverty and too much danger to allow them even to contemplate the idea of study. The trouble with the film's realism is that this situation is not problematised but celebrated.

Angela McRobbie



# Robin Hood – Men in Tights

USA 1993

Director: Mel Brooks

## Certificate

PG

## Distributor

Columbia TriStar

## Production Company

Brooksfilms

In association with

Gaumont

## Executive Producer

Peter Schindler

## Producer

Mel Brooks

## Executive in Charge of

Production

Robert Latham Brown

## Associate Producer

Evan Chandler

## Production Executive

Brooksfilms;

Leah Zappy

## Production Co-ordinator

Alyson Evans

## Production Manager

Robert Latham Brown

## Location Manager

Bill Bowling

## 2nd Unit Director

Peter Schindler

## Costing

Lindsay D. Chag

Bill Shepard

## Assistant Directors

Gregg Goldstone

Kenneth J. Silverstein

Judith Moore

Mark Tobey

## Screenplay

Mel Brooks

Evan Chandler

J. David Shapiro

## Story

J. David Shapiro

Evan Chandler

## Director of Photography

Michael D. O'Shea

## Colour

DeLuxe

## Additional Photography

Lloyd Ahern II

## Camera Operators

Michael Genne

## 2nd:

Steven H. Smith

## VTR Operator

Lindsay P. Hill

## Visual Effects

Dream Quest Images

Supervisor:

Mat Beck

## Animatronics

Optic Nerve

## Matte Paintings and Patriot

Arrow Effects

Illusion Arts Inc:

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

## Editor

Stephen E. Rivkin

Associate:

Darren T. Holmes

## Production Designer

Roy Forge Smith

## Art Director

Stephen Myles Berger

## Art Department

Co-ordinator

Jacqueline C. English

## Set Design

David M. Haber

Cate Bangs

Bruce Robert Hill

Gary A. Lee

## Set Decorator

Ronald R. Reiss

## Set Dresser

Mark Boucher

Nigel A. Boucher

Philip Calhoun

## Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Richard Ratliff

## Special Effects

Wayne Rose

Fred Tessaro

R. Michael Bisetti

Roger W. Lifsey

Terry P. Chapman

Mark R. Lienthal

## Music

Hummie Mann

## Orchestrations

Brad Dechter

Additional:

Frank Bennett

Don Nemitz

## Music Editor

Chris Ledesma

## Songs

"Men in Tights" by Mel

Brooks, performed by

the Merry Men Singers;

Steve Lively, Randy

Crenshaw, Kerry Katz,

Geoff Koch, Rick

Logan; "Marian" by

Mel Brooks, Hummie

Mann, performed by

Debbie James, Cathy

Dennis, Lance

Ellington; "Sherwood

Forest Rap" by Mel

Brooks, Hummie

Mann, performed by

Kevin Dorsey and the

Merry Men Singers;

"The Night Is Young

and You're So

Beautiful" by Billy

Rose, Irving Kahal,

Dana Suesse,

performed by Arthur

Rubin and the Merry

Men Singers

## Choreography

Cindy Montoya-Picker

## Costume Design

Dodie Shepard

## Wardrobe Supervisors

Christine Heinz

Charles DeMuth

## Make-up

Head:

Bari Dreiband-Burman

Carol Schwartz

Todd A. McIntosh

Blake Shepard

## Special Make-up Effects

Thomas R. Burman

## Hair Stylists

Key:

Linie White

Susan Zietlow-Maust

Judith Tiedemann

## Title Design

VCE/Peter Kuran

## Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

## Sound Design

Harry E. Snodgrass

## Supervising Sound Editors

Gregory M. Gerlich

Gary S. Gerlich

## Sound Editors

William Jacobs

Richard M. LeGrand Jr

Bruce Lacey

Andy Kopetzky

## Supervising ADR Editor

Petra Bach

## ADR Editor

Robert Ulrich

## Foley Editors

David L. Horton Jr

Scot A. Tinsley

## Production Sound

Jeff Wexler

Don Coufal

Gary Holland

## Sound Recordists

Mark "Frito" Long

## Scoring:

Armin Steiner

## Music:

Rick Riccio

## ADR:

Greg Steele

David Jobe

## Foley:

Nerses Gezalyan

Dolby stereo

## Sound Re-recordists

Steve Maslow

Gregg Landaker

## ADR:

Charleen Richards

Robert Deschaine

## Foley:

James Ashwill

## Sound Effects

Visiontrax Inc

## Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Gary "Wrecker" Hecker

## Stunt Co-ordinator

Brian Burrows

## Stunts

Dan Barringer

Blair Burrows

Erik Cord

Danny Costa

Kiante Elam

George Fisher

Lance Gilbert

Troy Gilbert

Larry Holt

Loren James

Robert J. Jauregui

Clint Lilley

William James Madden

John Phillip

Charles Picerni Jr

Steve Picerni

Jim Pratt

Philip J. Romano

George Marshall Ruge

Ben R. Scott

Paul G. Stalone

R.L. Tolbert

Richard Warlock

Ted White

Bob Yerkes

## Sword and Fight

Co-ordinator

Victor Paul

## Archery Master

Jack Verbois

## Wrangler Ramrod

Corky Randall

## Cast

Cary Elwes

Robin Hood

Richard Lewis

Prince John

Roger Rees

Sheriff of Nottingham

Amy Yasbeck

Marian

Mark Blankfield

Blinkin

Dee Chappelle

Ahchoo

Isaac Hayes

Asneezee

Megan Cavanagh

Broomhilde

Eric Allan Kramer

Little John

Matthew Porretta

Will Scarlet O'Hara

Tracey Ullman

Latrine

Patrick Stewart

King Richard

Don DeLuise

Don Giovanni

Dick Van Patten

The Abbot

Robert Ridgely

The Hangman

9,358 feet

104 minutes

## Mel Brooks

Rabbi Tuckman

Steve Tancora

Filthy Luca

Joe Dammick

Dirty Ezio

Avery Schreiber

Tax Assessor

Chuck McCann

Villager

Brian George

Dungeon Maitre D'

Zito Kazann

Head Saracen Guard

Richard Assad

Assistant Saracen

Guard

Herman Poppe

Sheriff's Guard

Clive Revill

Fire Marshall

Joe Baker

Angry Villager

Carol Arthur

Complaining Villager

Kelly Jones

Buxom Lass

Clement Von Franchenstein

Royal Announcer



◀ to the shirt-tails of *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves*. It probably could not have been made unless Kevin Costner had revived interest in the English folk hero, but that hardly seems an excuse for Brooks to imitate Costner's 'original' quite so slavishly. After all, Costner's own version of Robin was tongue-in-cheek anyway. You would have expected Brooks to be far more promiscuous in his references, to cull jokes and scenes from every version of the Sherwood Forest yarn, to parody vintage swashbucklers like Fairbanks and Flynn.

Admittedly, Brooks manages to incorporate rap music, transforms Friar Tuck into a rabbi, and nicely lampoons Hollywood's idealised vision of England as a green, ambrosian land. His Robin, he insists, is the first one in movie history to speak with an authentic English accent. However, for all its self-reflexivity, this remains a traditional version of a story which is already as old as the hills. Often, it seems less a skit on Costner's picture than an inept remake. The glossy production values are out of place. Perhaps if the trees were made of papier mâché, the costumes were less detailed, and the landscapes not quite so lush, there might be some comedy in the director always drawing attention to the fact that "it's only a movie." And any hopes that Brooks is going to have some fun and games with the men in tights, subverting notions of heroic masculinity and indulging in a little *Top Gun*-style homoeroticism, are soon dashed.

There is little consolation in the performances. Cary Elwes, at least, is suitably chivalric as Robin, and has a nice line in wry, self-deprecating humour, while Richard Lewis plays Prince John as if he were a reincarnated Marty Feldman. But the rest of the cast give garish, over-the-top performances, sometimes verging on desperation. Roger Rees offers a fair approximation of Alan Rickman's villainous Sheriff, but lacks Rickman's gift for oleaginous comedy (in this respect, *Prince of Thieves* is actually funnier than *Men in Tights*). Brooks regular Dom DeLuise does an appalling Marlon Brando turn as Mafia chief Don Giovanni, complete with cotton wool in cheeks, and Tracey Ullman as the witch Latrine is bogged down by so many layers of make-up that she is hard pressed to give a performance at all. Patrick Stewart, from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, gallops into frame at the end to imitate Sean Connery's cameo as King Richard in the Costner picture, again seemingly unaware that what he is parodying was a parody in the first place. There is much laboured *Up Pompeii*-style comedy about Marion's chastity belt, and one or two nicely choreographed fight sequences before the film finally peters out.

Now that much of Brooks's thunder has been stolen by the likes of Abrahams and Zucker, it is hard to see where he can go from here. Maybe he'll try to wreak his mischief on *Last Action Hero*, but the joke will be on him.

Geoffrey Macnab

## Le Roman de Renard (The Tale of the Fox)

France 1930-31

Director: Wladyslaw Starewicz

<b>Certificate</b>	<b>Music</b>
Not yet issued	Vincent Scotto
<b>Distributor</b>	<b>Music Director</b>
BFI	Raymond Legrand
<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Song</b>
A Wladyslaw Starewicz production	"La Romance du chat" performed by Jaime Plana
<b>Producers</b>	
Louis Nalpas	
Roger Richebé	
<b>Screenplay</b>	<b>Voices</b>
Wladyslaw Starewicz	Claude Dauphin
Irène Starewicz	Monkey
<b>Adaptation</b>	<b>Romain Bonquet</b>
Roger Richebé	Fox
Based on <i>Die Reineke Fuchs</i> by Goethe from the medieval story	Sylvain Mline
<i>Le Roman de Renart</i>	Wolf
<b>Dialogue</b>	Léon Larive
Jean Nohain	Bear
Antoinette Nordmann	Robert Sella
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Cock
Wladyslaw Starewicz	Edy Debray
B/W	Badger
<b>Animation</b>	Nicolas Amato
Wladyslaw Starewicz	Cat
Irène Starewicz	Suz Dornac
<b>Editor</b>	Fox Cub
Laura Séjourné	Raine
<b>Production Designer</b>	Lion
Wladyslaw Starewicz	Pons
	Donkey
	Sylvia Bataille
	Rabbit
	5,850 feet
	65 minutes
	Subtitles

● A monkey cameraman projects the film's credits, and a monkey storyteller then shows the audience the book on which *The Tale of the Fox* is based. The crafty Fox plagues the lives of other animals with nefarious con tricks. Particularly aggrieved are the Blackbird, the Wolf and the Rabbit. They take their complaints to the court of the Lion, King of the Beasts. Despite the advocacy of the Badger in the Fox's defence, the King decrees that all animals must become vegetarians, apart from himself. When disorder breaks out again, the King sends the Wolf, the Bear, the Cat and the Badger to fetch the Fox to court for arraignment. All fail due to the Fox's devious ruses, so the entire kingdom attacks his castle. The Fox manages to repulse all attacks



Starewicz - animation on the wild side

with the help of his family and some ingenious contraptions. Defeated, the King resigns himself to the invincibility of the Fox, and makes himself a minister of state in recognition of his acumen.

● A legend among animation fans, the work of Wladyslaw Starewicz (or Starevitch in the French spelling) is more often heard of than seen. Although more material has wandered in from the archival wilderness lately, for the most part his reputation has been built on the slender but sturdy edifice of short films like *The Camera-man's Revenge* and *Frogland*. In the former, a traditional comic melodrama, similar to those made by Biograph in the 1910s, is enacted by a cast composed entirely of animated insects, while the latter concerns a political coup in an amphibian community.

Starewicz's career in animation grew out of his interests in photography and entomology. Along with technical precision and dark satirical humour, his films exhibit a scientist's passion for observing intricate details. This delight is especially evident in *The Tale of the Fox*, his only feature, where for all their anthropomorphic gestures, the naturalism of the animals' movements closely mimics that of their real counterparts. Starewicz puts one in mind of another entomologist whose own biography parallels his in many ways - Vladimir Nabokov, who once wrote, "I discovered in nature the non-utilitarian delights that I sought in art. Both were a form of magic, both were a game of intricate enchantment and deception."

Deception is very much at the heart of *The Tale of the Fox*. If the film were made today, its star, a confidence-fox who is rewarded for his deviousness, would raise an outcry for setting a bad example to children. So too would some of the film's saltier jokes, like a flirtatious hen being described in the subtitles as a "cockteaser". Compared with current animation techniques, the film might seem charming but a little primitive. In fact, considering that it is primarily the work of one man with a few assistants, it is an astounding example of cinematic prestidigitation. The battle scene is an achievement on the level of staging *Ben Hur* in a show box. As in *Frogland*, there seems to be subtle political allegory afoot about the ineffectuality of government, but the screenplay - by Starewicz and his daughter Irène - touches on this only delicately.

Finally getting its British premiere 50 years after it was made, *The Tale of the Fox* is mandatory viewing for anyone interested in animation or early cinema, or simply looking for animal stories as different from Disney's recent *Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey* as a film could possibly be. It supports Charles Ford's 1958 claim that "Wladyslaw Starewicz is one of those cinemagicians whose name deserves to stand in film history beside those of Méliès, Emile Cohl and Disney."

Leslie Felperin Sharman

## The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb

United Kingdom 1993

Director: the bolexbrothers

<b>Certificate</b>	<b>Music</b>
12	Startled Insects
<b>Distributor</b>	<b>Song</b>
ICA Projects	"Tom Thumb Theme" by and performed by John Paul Jones
<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Model Costumes</b>
A bolexbrothers production for BBC Bristol	Jane Adams
La Sept	<b>Costumes/Make-up</b>
Manga Entertainment Limited	The bolexbrothers
In association with Lumen Films	Frank Passingham
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Nick Upton
BBC:	Mike Gifford
Colin Rose	John Schofield
La Sept:	Lee Wilton
Thierry Garrel	<b>Make-up Consultant</b>
<b>Producer</b>	Jean Thurlow
Richard 'Hutch' Hutchison	<b>Sound Design</b>
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Andy Kennedy
Hengemeh Panahi	<b>Sound Editor</b>
<b>Production Manager</b>	Chris Dickens
Mike Gifford	<b>Sound Re-recorder</b>
<b>2nd Unit Director</b>	Paul Hamblin
Frank Passingham	<b>Foley Artists</b>
<b>Screenplay</b>	Diane Greaves
Dave Borthwick	Jack Stew
<b>Lighting Camera</b>	
Dave Borthwick	<b>Cast</b>
Frank Passingham	Nick Upton
In colour	Deborah Colliard
<b>Key Animation</b>	Frank Passingham
Dave Borthwick	John Schofield
Frank Passingham	Mike Gifford
Lee Wilton	Robert Heath
<b>Background Artists</b>	George Brandt
Tim Farrington	Andy Davis
Bill Thurston	Dave Alex Riddell
<b>Editor/Production Designer</b>	Andy Joyce
Dave Borthwick	Richard Golezowski
<b>Sets</b>	Tim Norfolk
The bolexbrothers	John Beedol
Frank Passingham	Andy McCormack
Nick Upton	
Mike Gifford	<b>Voices</b>
John Schofield	Brett Lane
Lee Wilton	Helen Vayne
<b>Set Dressers</b>	Paul Vayne
Cathy Price	Peter Townsend
Beverley Knowlden	Mario Clifford
<b>Set Drawings</b>	Tim Hands
Mark Brierley	Andrew Bailey
<b>Character Models</b>	Nick Upton
Justin Exley	John Schofield
Jan Sanger	
	5,412 feet
	60 minutes

● An accident in an artificial sperm bank leads to a woman giving birth to a tiny mutant boy whom she and her husband name Tom. Masked men steal Tom, take him to a laboratory for tests, and kill his mother. With the help of a mutant creature, Tom escapes and meets a community of people his own size, apparently also victims of the laboratory. The leader of the little people, Jack, fancies himself a 'giant' slayer. He and Tom Thumb meet up with Tom's father, but the father is killed in a brawl. Using another full-sized man to gain access to the laboratory, Tom and Jack destroy the central power source, blowing up both themselves and the lab. In Heaven, Tom is reunited with his parents. The final image is of flies forming a halo around his shadow on the wall.



With the London-based live-action film industry suffering from a permanent state of anaemia, patriotic cinephiles can at least be proud of the robust health of the Bristol and South Wales animation scene. The output of Aardman Animations, Fairweather Films et al has mainly consisted of excellent shorts and television work. However, with the exception of the execrable British-Hungarian co-production *The Princess and the Goblin*, financing for full length features has been scarce. After making a ten-minute version, which caused an outrage when shown on BBC2 in 1988, small independent production company the bolexbrothers (founded by Dave Borthwick and Dave Riddett) managed to garner enough capital to make this striking film against the odds.

The dark revisionist retelling of a classic fairy tale is now a standard trope of independent animation storytelling, one that has received very different treatment by such diverse artists as Vera Neubauer (*Princesses*), Phil Mulloy (*Red Riding Hood*), and Paul Berry (*The Sandman*). The bolexbrothers project the story of Tom Thumb through the prism of science-fiction dystopia, enabling them to make sly digs at genetic engineering and animal testing, but it's more a mutation of the story than a wholesale destruction. Despite the emphasis on monstrosity, flecks of pathos shine through that

may in particular move younger viewers (if they're not cowering under their seats in fear).

The animation itself is technically faultless. To combine 'pixilated' actors who move jerkily in tandem with animated models is no mean feat. Resisting the temptation to cheat with straight filming when no models are involved, the film makers have crafted a superbly integrated product, a coherent vision of a chaotic and disharmonious world, full of filth, detritus and lurid decay. It's so successful that one feels churlish in pointing out that, aesthetically, the film is a wee bit derivative.

The look of the seedy sets and mutant creatures owes much to the inevitable influences of Svankmajer and the Brothers Quay, though the story is more accessible than the work of either. Tom himself bears a striking resemblance to the baby in *Eraserhead*, while the laboratory and the opening sequences both recall *Brazil*. Also, the menagerie of twitching animated insects works as an affectionate homage to the early work of Wladislaw Starewicz, whose late work *Tale of the Fox* will be re-released just before this film's distribution. Nonetheless, the whole is greater than its slightly ragged parts, adding up to a mesmerising debut feature that bodes well for future work.

Leslie Felperin Sharman



Dad's my boy: Nick Upton

## Sono otoko, kyobo ni tsuki (Violent Cop)

Japan 1989

Director: Takeshi Kitano

<b>Certificate</b>	18	<b>Shiro Sano</b>	Police Chief Yoshinari
<b>Distributor</b>	ICA	<b>Shigeru Hirazumi</b>	Detective Iwaki
<b>Production Company</b>	Bandai Media Division/Shochiku-Fuji Company	<b>Mihiko Otonashi</b>	Iwaki's wife
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Kazuyoshi Okuyama	<b>Maki Ryu</b>	Kiyohiro
<b>Producers</b>	Hisao Nabeshima Takio Yoshida Shozo Ichiyama	<b>Itoku Kishibe</b>	Nito
<b>Line Producer</b>	Akinori Kuroda	<b>Ken Yoshizawa</b>	Shinkai
<b>Production Supervisors</b>	Kazuo Kuroi Masayuki Kaihara	<b>Hiroaki Katsube</b>	Deputy Police Chief Higuchi
<b>Production Manager</b>	Hideyasu Nakamura	<b>Noboru Hamada</b>	Chief Detective Araki
<b>Costing</b>	Takashi Yoshikawa	<b>Yuuki Kawai</b>	Detective Honma
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Yoshihiro Tenma Takashi Tsukinogi	<b>Ritsuko Amano</b>	Honma's Piancée
<b>Screenplay</b>	Hisashi Nozawa	<b>Taro Ishida</b>	Detective Tomosato
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Yasushi Sakakibara	<b>Keichi Ueda</b>	Detective Ishibashi
<b>In colour</b>		<b>Yoshimi Hara</b>	Detective Tashiro
<b>Effects</b>	Yukio Hokari	<b>Katsuki Muramatsu</b>	Deputy Commissioner Anan
<b>Editor</b>	Nobutake Kamiya	<b>Anan</b>	
<b>Art Directors</b>	Masuteru Mochizuki Kazuyoshi Sawaji	<b>Kenichi Endo</b>	Emoto
<b>Special Effects</b>	Hisao Notoki Yuichi Karasawa	<b>El Kawakami</b>	Hashizume
<b>Music</b>	Daisaku Kume	<b>Hashizume</b>	Kimimari Matsumoto
<b>Based partly on themes by Eric Satie</b>		<b>Sakai</b>	
<b>Music Producer</b>	Mamiko Sasaki	<b>Zhao Fanghao</b>	Psychiatrist Izumi
<b>Sound Recordist</b>	Senji Horiuchi	<b>Kengakusha Akiyama</b>	
<b>Dolby stereo</b>		<b>Niken Matsuoaka</b>	Kazuyoshi Ozawa
<b>Sound Re-recordists</b>	Masashi Iwahashi	<b>Kazuyoshi Ozawa</b>	Sosumu Torashima
<b>Fight Choreographers</b>	Tatsushi Kikuchi Makoto Tsugawa	<b>Tetsu Sakuma</b>	Hiroki Ida
<b>Car Stunts</b>	Masashige Takuchi	<b>Kei Hayami</b>	Atsuko Tadano
<b>Cast</b>		<b>Atsuko Tadano</b>	Hiroko Nishina
<b>'Beat' Takeshi (Takeshi Kitano)</b>		<b>Yoshikazu Tanimura</b>	Meiji Serizawa
<b>Detective Azuma</b>		<b>Meiji Serizawa</b>	Setoshi Mihara
<b>Makio Kawakami</b>		<b>Setoshi Mihara</b>	Motoharu Tamura
<b>Akari</b>		<b>Motoharu Tamura</b>	Takashi Hosome
<b>Makoto Ashigawa</b>		<b>Takashi Hosome</b>	Ginji Nakamura
<b>Kikuchi</b>		<b>Ginji Nakamura</b>	Hayato Ichimonji
		<b>Hayato Ichimonji</b>	Kenichiro Ito
		<b>Kenichiro Ito</b>	Hirofumi Hamada
		<b>Hirofumi Hamada</b>	Hiroki Nakayama

**Cast**  
'Beat' Takeshi (Takeshi Kitano)  
Detective Azuma  
Makio Kawakami  
Akari  
Makoto Ashigawa  
Kikuchi

9,230 feet  
103 minutes

Subtitles

Present-day Tokyo. Homicide Squad detective Azuma, aged 39 and unmarried, has no respect for his superiors or police procedures; he believes in rough natural justice and administers it freely to wrongdoers who cross his path. He lives with his sister Akari, who has a history of mental problems and drug dependency, and his only real friend is his police colleague Iwaki. On the day that Police Chief Yoshinari arrives to head their divisional office, Azuma is assigned new recruit Kikuchi as a partner. The rookie is stunned by his mentor's ruthless methods.

Small-time drug pusher Emoto is

murdered by Kiyohiro, a psychotic hit-man working for the outwardly respectable businessman Nito; Emoto's mistakes were to demand better terms, and to reveal he knew that Nito's drug supplies originated within the police force. Reluctantly investigating the murder, Azuma botches a raid on the home of one of Emoto's customers, leaving the suspect dead under the wheels of a police car and detective Honma seriously wounded. Azuma next tackles drug pusher Hashizume and batters out of him the rumour that Iwaki is the source of the drug supply. Iwaki goes missing soon after a conversation with Nito's man Sakai. His body is found hanging under a bridge.

While Azuma and Kikuchi pursue their enquiries in vain, Kiyohiro punishes Hashizume for talking to Azuma by stalking and killing him - an initiative for which Nito reprimands him. Still lacking firm evidence in the case, Azuma confronts Nito in a restaurant, then arrests Kiyohiro on a trumped-up charge and beats him up in the police station. Yoshinari, outraged, orders Azuma to resign from the force. But Kiyohiro launches a vendetta against the ex-cop. He kidnaps Akari and allows three young punks to rape her and inject her with heroin; he then attacks Azuma in the street, leaving him with a serious stab wound. Azuma buys a black-market gun, barges into Nito's office and shoots him dead. Kiyohiro kills the punks for wanting to run away from Azuma's vengeance, before dying himself in a shoot-out with Azuma. Azuma shoots his now-deranged sister to put her out of her misery, and is himself gunned down by an unseen assassin. Some time later, Nito's operations have been taken over by his aide Shinkai, and Kikuchi has become the new policeman passing on seized narcotics for resale.

In outline, *Violent Cop* sounds like any number of other generic vigilante cop movies made in the years since *Dirty Harry*. The fact that it is Japanese explains some of its departures from Hollywood norms: the climax and the coda are both blacker than anything American audiences are taught to expect, and the moments of violence are more intense, more detailed and above all more personalised than in any Hollywood equivalent. But the mixture of pessimism and violence that actually hurts isn't enough to explain why the film as it plays doesn't feel like a genre movie at all. What makes it 'different' is not so much its cultural background as the persona of its director/star.

Takeshi Kitano (still known to everyone in Japan as 'Beat' Takeshi, from his days with the stand-up comedy duo 'The Two Beats') is the most singular figure in present-day Japanese culture. Western audiences know him only for his role as the 'common soldier' Sgt Hara in Oshima's *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence*, but he enjoys unrivalled visibility in Japan as an actor, novelist, sports commentator and media per- ▶



sonality. He embodies a certain working-class type to perfection – which is why he is generally cast as cops, *yakuza* and nouveau-riche businessmen – but counters his own stereotyping by voicing highly personal attitudes that frequently cut against the grain of Japanese consensus. *Violent Cop* was his first feature as director, and it launched his assault on the prime tenets of Japanese masculinity – an assault since taken further in ever more idiosyncratic and formally inventive ways in *Boiling Point*, *A Scene at the Sea* and *Sonatine*. Here, the entire film becomes an echo-chamber for the kinks, blockages and dangers of Detective Azuma's personality. Even the disturbing, unexpected rhythms of the cutting seem to take their pace from Azuma's loping stride, underscored by synthesised Satie on the soundtrack. As a result, the film's vision of the corrupt 'system' that oils Japan's wheels of power – the cosy conspiracy between senior cops and criminals that may or may not be fictional – is lent alarming credibility by the sheer weight of Takeshi's performance at its centre.

In Japanese terms, Azuma is a true oddball: middle-aged cops are supposed to be married, polite and considerably patriarchal. Azuma's bachelor status is partly explained by his obligation to look after his mentally ill sister, although his regard for her is conspicuously unsentimental; when he finally shoots her, it is less because she's fallen over the brink than because he knows he won't be around to pull her back and cannot trust the system to do it for him. His relationship with the rookie cop Kikuchi is a one-man demolition of the orthodox *sempai/kohai* (mentor-apprentice) partnership so revered in Japanese male circles (although it's notable that Azuma bristles when another cop tries to patronise Kikuchi), and his habit of bludgeoning perceived criminals into confessing their crimes drives tracks through the conventions of etiquette, restraint and face-saving. The brilliant opening scene sketches Azuma's attitudes and *modus operandi*: right after we see three high-school students beat up a street-sleeper for the hell of it, Azuma barges into a middle-class household and up to the bedroom of one of the culprits, to give him a taste of his own medicine and to order him to turn himself in the next day. It takes criminals and cowards to bring out Azuma's borderline-psychotic rage, but his capacity for violence is just an extension of his everyday demeanour, which blends poker-faced impassivity with a comic misanthropy worthy of W.C. Fields.

The sadistic hit-man Kiyohiro (played by Korean actor Haku Ryu, now established as Japanese cinema's answer to Christopher Walken) is another loose cannon: Azuma's equal and opposite. Some Western critics are moaning that the film's emphasis on Kiyohiro's homosexuality (the murder of Emoto is shot and played like a gay love scene, and much attention is given to the bisexuality of one of the killer's pet punks) is evidence of direc-



Lethal weapon: 'Beat' Takeshi

torial homophobia, but they're missing the point. Kiyohiro's gayness makes him all the more formidable a foe for Azuma; even more than his psychopathology, it makes him a prime transgressor of Japanese social taboos. Azuma certainly isn't phased by it: when he raids Kiyohiro's apartment and finds a naked boy in the killer's bed, his only comment is "Good taste" – which chimes interestingly with his own apparent celibacy. It's their matching eagerness to break through taboos that makes both Azuma and Kiyohiro characters worth celebrating, and pits both of them against the 'systems' they work for. Of course, it is the 'systems' that prevail. The film's closing credits roll over a freeze-frame of a secretary who has just handed a fat envelope of used banknotes to her boss to pay off another bent cop – an exemplar of the very mindless conformity and complicity that 'hero' and 'villain' both stood against.

Other levels of interest aside, simply as an off-beat thriller *Violent Cop* is one of the most striking first features in recent cinema. Dialogue is minimal throughout (comparison with the published Japanese script reveals that Takeshi axed a lot during filming, including some explaining that Iwaki sold seized narcotics because he was dying from cancer and wanted to provide for his widow) and visual details carry much of the meaning. Sequences tend to be composed in cool, fixed-angle images whose impartiality improbably evokes Bresson. There are a number of terrific cinematic ideas, like presenting the major chase scene – Azuma and Kikuchi pursue a fugitive round an entire district of Tokyo on foot and by car – in terms of a baseball run, complete with a length of metal piping wielded like a bat and an action-replay-style use of elegiac slow-motion for a fight. This sequence sets up the later cross-cutting between the punks abusing Akari and the newly unemployed Azuma killing time in a deserted baseball stadium – just one example of the film's careful structuring and concern with the resonances of its imagery. But all of the film's strengths ultimately rest on the impact of Takeshi's own presence. *Violent Cop* stands with some of Clint Eastwood's finest work as a film in which the director is literally the star.

**Tony Rayns**

## Undercover Blues

USA 1993

Director: Herbert Ross

### Certificate

12

### Distributor

UIP

### Production Company

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

### Executive Producers

Herbert Ross

Andrew Bergman

### Producer

Mike Lobell

### Associate Producers

Kim Kurumada

Adam Merims

Steve Warner

### Production Co-ordinator

Daren Hicks

### Unit Production Manager

Kim Kurumada

### Location Manager

Iddo Lampton

Enochs Jnr

### Post-production

Co-ordinator

Elizabeth W. Alexander

### 2nd Unit Director

Glenn H. Randall Jnr

### Casting

Hank McCann

### Associate:

Jason Wood

New Orleans Extras:

Marshall Peck

### Assistant Directors

Barry K. Thomas

Jeff Okabayashi

New Orleans:

Bob Wagner

Los Angeles:

Kate Yurka

2nd Unit:

Tracy Rosenthal

Ann C. Salzer

### Screenplay

Ian Abrams

### Director of Photography

Donald E. Thorin

In colour

Prints by

DuArt

### 2nd Unit Director

of Photography

John Stephens

### Camera Operators

A:

Frederic J. Smith

B:

Chris Hayes

2nd Unit:

Rod Vidor

### Video Playback

Pat Suraci

### Graphics

Vincent Giordano

### Editor

Priscilla Nedd-Friendly

Additional:

Gregg London

### Production Designer

Ken Adam

### Art Director

William J. Durrell Jnr

### Art Department

Co-ordinator

Kacy Magedman

### Set Design

James R. Bayliss

### Set Decorator

Jeff Haley

### Set Dressers

Daril Alder

Douglas M. Vaughn

Chris Carlson

Vincenzo Buffolino

Michael Ray

New Orleans:

Chris Spellman

James P. Meehan

Robert E. Alcalá

Lead Scenic Artist

Sharleen Bright

### Special Effects

### Co-ordinator

Stan Parks

### Special Effects

Daniel Sudick

Scott E. Forbes

Johnny D. Fontana

Samuel E. Price

Tim Moran

### Music

David Newman

### Music Performed by

Street Musicians:

Guitar:

Danny Barker

Carl LeBlanc

Trumpet:

Clyde Kerr Jnr

Accordion:

Bruce "Sunpie" Barnes

### Music Consultants

Jackie Krost

Sharal Churchill

New Orleans:

Sunny Schneidau

Doctor Michael White

### Music Supervisor

Peter Afterman

### Supervising Music Editor

Tom Villano

### Temp Score Music Editor

Curtis Roush

### Songs

"Grandpa's Stomp",

"Last Chance Blues"

by Wilson "Willie Tee"

Turbinton,

"Christopher

Columbus" by Andy

Razaf, Leon Berry,

performed by New

Orleans Jazz All-Stars;

"Down Yonder"

by Milton Batiste,

performed by The

Olympia Serenaders;

"If You Came Here

To Jam" by Wilson

"Willie Tee" Turbinton,

performed by Wilson

"Willie Tee" Turbinton,

George French: "Big

Chief" by E. Goines,

a.k.a. Earl S. Johnson/

Earl King, performed

by Wilson "Willie Tee"

Turbinton, Emile

Vinett, George French

Jnr; "New Orleans

Samba", "Uptown

Blues" by Steve

Deutsch, performed by

J.B. Davis; "Someday

Sweetheart" by

Benjamin Spikes, John

Spikes, performed by

Paul Barbarin and His

New Orleans Jazz Band;

"Black Bottom Stomp"

by Ferdinand Joseph

Morton, performed

by Jelly Roll Morton;

"Blues in E Flat"

performed by

The ReBirth Brass Band

and The Little Rascals;

"Didn't He Ramble"

performed by Excelsior

Brass Band; "Lawdy

Miss Clawdy" by Lloyd

Price, performed

by James Booker;

"Crosseyed Cat" by

McKinley Morganfield,

performed by Muddy

Waters; "La Valse des

Cajuns" by Iry Lefune,

performed by David

Doucet

Choreography

D.J. Giagni

Costume Design

Wayne Finkelman

Wardrobe Supervisor

B. Hope Slepak

### Make-up

Tom Case

Bob Mills

Key:

Steve Abrums

Body:

Jene Fielder

### Hair Stylists

Kathryn Blondell

Key:

Barbara Lorenz

### Title Design

Gregory McClatchy

Film

### Main Title Opticals

Bipack Inc

### Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

### Supervising Sound Editors

Charles L. Campbell

Chuck Neely

### Sound Editors

Rick Franklin

Doug Jackson

Nils Jensen

Gary Mundheim

Gary Krivacek

### ADR Supervisor

Larry Singer

### ADR Editor

Andrea Horta

### Sound Recordist

Dennis L. Maitland

Stage:

Matt Patterson

Music:

Tim Boyle

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

### Foley Artists

John Roesch

Alicia Stevenson

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Glenn H. Randall Jnr

### Stunts

Dan Barringer

Eddie Braun

Charlie Brewer

Cheryl Wheeler-Dixon

Kiante Elam

Jeffrey Evans

Dana Hee

Larry Holt

Jeffrey Imada

Terry Jackson

Julius LeFlore

James Lew

Bill McIntosh

Gene Walker

George P. Wilbur

Jim Wilkey

### Weapons Specialists

Michael Gibbons

Richard Pine

### Cast

Kathleen Turner

Jane Blue

### Dennis Quaid

Jeff Blue

Fiona Shaw

Novacek

### Stanley Tucci



low them as the couple track down Novacek through a weak scientist employee of hers and evade her hitmen. Out for revenge, Muerte is on Jeff and Jane's trail but comes out the worst in every encounter he has with them. Finally, they trick him into going to Novacek's island where she holds him prisoner. When the two cops discover the Blues breaking into the scientist's house, Jeff and Jane tell them half the story. Finally, Jeff goes to Novacek's island, leaving Jane behind. One cop follows him there and both are taken prisoner. Jane and 'Jane Louise' have also been kidnapped. But just as Novacek is crowing over her victory, Jane throws the baby at her: it turns out to be a bomb and the couple escape. After a long chase, Novacek and Jane fight it out on a muddy bank. A helicopter with one of Novacek's former Czech colleagues descends from the sky to lift her up. She climbs into it, only to find that she has been tricked by the Americans. Jane and Jeff return to their hotel in time for breakfast. They hire a yacht and set sail, only to find Muerte on board, still out for revenge. Pushing him overboard, they leave him clinging to a life ring.

The baby, that yuppie-movie accessory of the 80s, makes a comeback here in a jokey effort to bring the secret service up to date. In this family, in which sexual equality seems to be paramount, both Jeff and Jane twirl their infant around as insouciantly as they kick, fight and charm their way out of numerous dangerous encounters. In fact, when Jane throws 'Jane Louise' at Novacek, the shock is not that she's chucking her baby around but that she isn't.

It isn't hard to see what Kathleen Turner is doing here: the Blues partnership smacks of an updated *Romancing the Stone* affair. And Turner, anxious to prove her high-kicking, gun-slinging credentials, lets slip no opportunity

to do her very worst to relatively innocent marauders without so much as mussing her hair. Dennis Quaid, meanwhile, after a run of execrable film choices, seems to have settled into the loud, brash clever-boy role he now does best. It's all very cute - a happy, beautiful, wide-eyed, sassy, secret agent family. But it doesn't take long for it to become rather too sickeningly knowing.

And despite the tinge of sophistication in that premise, the film is boringly old-fashioned in its choice of villains: foreigners with silly names and ridiculous accents. Fiona Shaw may have had fun swapping the dowdy eccentrics she usually plays for the vampy Novacek - a mixture of Rosa Klebb and Lene Lovich - but we've seen it all before. And Stanley Tucci's Muerte, a writhing beanpole in black leather, reduced by a flick of a Blue wrist from snarling villain to squealing child, stops being funny after his first appearance. Like so much else in the film, he's one joke played out again and again.

The cartoon strokes of the characters are matched by a New Orleans backdrop that is happier and bigger than life. At every opportunity, a jazz band comes marching round the corner, down the street, in the cemetery or into a restaurant - as if Herbert Ross had realised that the film isn't interesting enough to carry itself as a comedy/action picture and needs a bit of musical packing. And when Dennis Quaid steps up and joins the band on the trumpet, you wish someone would give him a good smack and tell him not to behave like a brattish show-off.

What is certainly in the film's favour, however, is that it presents a somewhat different, if equally romantic, view of the FBI from the recent crop of serious movies: these amiable, devious agents are completely without angst.

Amanda Lipman

## TV FILM

# Down Among the Big Boys

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Charles Gormley

### Distributor

BBC TV

### Production Company

BBC Scotland  
For Screen One

### Executive Producers

Richard Broke  
Bill Bryden

### Producer

Andy Park

### Production Associate

Maryann Wilson

### Production Manager

Jill Welsh

### Location Managers

Richard McGill  
Graeme Gordon

### Assistant Directors

Tommy Gormley  
Kate Ledger

Jane Baxter

Ben Johnson

### Screenplay

Peter McDougall

### Director of Photography

Elmer Cossey

### In colour

### Camera Operator

Nigel Slatter

### Visual Effects Design

Roger Turner

### Graphic Design

Susan Leitch

### Editor

David Harvie

### Designer

Campbell Gordon

### Music

Ray Russell

Simon Chamberlain

### Costume Design

Delphine Roche-

Gordon

### Make-up Design

Graham Johnston

### Sound Recordist

Louis Kramer

### Dubbing Mixer

Paul Hamblin

### Cast

Billy Connolly

Jojo Donnelly

Douglas Henshall

Louie Gibbons

Alex Norrie

Dan Gibbons

Maggie Bell

Jean Donnelly

Ken Drury

Louis Gibbons

Katherine Stark

Jenny Gibbons

John Muriagh

Gerry

### Ashley Jensen

Clair Donnelly

Ewan Stewart

Mick

Rab Affleck

Bungalow

Kenneth Lindsay

Nosey Men in Bar

John Bett

Sam the Forger

Billy O'Hara

Andy Bell

Pool Players

Freddie Boardley

William

Simon Donald

Aiden

Donald Macneil

Brothel Proprietor

Varl Sylvester

Woman in Brothel

Victoria Mairn

Jane

Gary Lewis

Jacketless

John O'Toole

Barman

Sandy Neilson

Older Husband

Mary Riggins

Older Wife

Caroline Paterson

Young Wife

Garry Stewart

Young Husband

Steve Owen

Man at Jukebox

Bill Barclay

Dancing Cop

Stuart Hepburn

Glazing Boss

Stevie Hannan

Mate

David Findlay

Cop at Walk

James Gibb

Drunk at Walk

Iain Agnew

John Farrow

Kenneth Bryans

Sergeant at Bank

Jim Byars

Martin McCordie

Detectives

David McKay

Noreen Boyle

Couple Waiting for Bus

Maggie Macritchie

Nosey Neighbour

man, intimates that he has seen Jojo somewhere before. Jojo scoffs at this notion and Louis is distracted by the news that Jojo has bought a detached house for the bride- and groom-to-be. Louie's investigations are concluded moments before the wedding ceremony, however, when his uncle confesses to his part in the crime, but points out that it would be unfair to arrest him since he has always been more of a father to him than Jojo. Louie cannot make up his mind what to do, but as he stands by Jojo's side at the altar, a smile creeps across his face.

As is usual with films made for television, *Down Among the Big Boys* is billed as being by its writer, Peter McDougall. But if this is decidedly not a director's film then it should be pointed out that Charles Gormley puts in a better than workmanlike performance. He knows about economy and precision. There is a beautifully judged scene in a Glasgow boozier where Gormley delineates both the space and several of the pub's characters within less than a minute.

For this is a most democratically constructed film. Every character is perfectly realised. Although she is on screen for a total of less than ten minutes, Louie's put-upon mother is as convincing as a rabbit punch.

The film has something of Bill Forsyth's whimsy, an element which comes to the fore in the big robbery scene in the middle. Having demolished a wall with what he considers far too much ease, Bungalow shakes his head, disgusted at the quality of the brickwork. While Connolly and his men are kitted out with designer tool belts and know about spraying aerosols to detect laser beams, they hardly look the part. Instead of being dressed in regulation caper movie catsuits, they are stripped to the waist, their incipient breasts and pendulous guts ludicrously exposed; only a close-up of a builder's cleft is missing. Once inside the vault, Connolly is allowed a brief but exhilarating full rein. He encourages the gang to join in a song and dance as he sets about exploding the safety deposit boxes.

Much of the film's dialogue is also a joy. Jojo describes his daughter's forthcoming wedding as "a mixed marriage", one of the dumber members of his gang is said to have "a head full of stretch marks", another as being "up to his intellect in debt" (which doesn't mean very much, but listen to Connolly deliver the line).

Nonetheless, this is not a faultless script. Jojo's leitmotif is his use of the phrase "tickety-boo", so it is less than credible that when Louie discovers that the shop is owned by Tickety Boo Productions, he does not put two and two together. Then again, since the film is actually about the suspension of disbelief - about that fact that we cannot help liking people we know we should not trust - it seems apt. No surprise, then, that one cannot help but like this not quite delightful film.

Christopher Bray



Glorious mud: Kathleen Turner, Fiona Shaw



# Money For Nothing

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Michael Ockrent

**Distributor** BBC TV  
**Production Company** BBC Films  
**For Screen 1**  
**Executive Producer** Richard Broke  
**Producer** Andr  e Molyneux  
**Associate Producer** Matthew Hamilton  
**Production Executive** Christopher Cameron  
**Production Manager** Terry Wright  
**New York:** Denis Hann  
**Location Manager** Rudolph Callegari  
**Casting Adviser:** Suzanne Smith  
**New York:** Hughes Moss Casting  
**Assistant Directors** Dermot Boyd  
**Andy Jackson**  
**Beni Turkson**  
**New York:** Rich Greenberg  
**Screenplay** Tim Firth  
**Director of Photography** Renni Adefarasin  
**In colour**  
**Steadicam Operator** Adrian Smith  
**Graphics** Linda Thomson  
**Editor** John Storhart  
**Production Designer** Paul Joel  
**Set Decorator** Laurie Friedman  
**Set Dresser** Eric Metzger  
**Music** John Dankworth  
**Music Performed by** The Dankworth Big Band  
**Song** "Slow and Easy" by Cleo Laine, John Dankworth, performed by Cleo Laine  
**Costume Design** Philip Lester  
**Sarah-Jane Ellis**  
**Wardrobe Supervisor** Anne Gorman  
**Make-up** Suzanne Jansen  
**Sound Editors** Helen Whitehead  
**Catherine Hodgson**  
**Sound Recordists** Paul Hamblin  
**Stuart Moser**

**Julian Glover**  
**Mr Farquharson**  
**Martin Short**  
**Harrison Killray**  
**Lacy Harding**  
**Julie Hodgkiss**  
**Tim Pierce**  
**Mr Derbyshire**  
**Garoth Pritchard**  
**Gary's Brother**  
**Penny Leatherbarrow**  
**Gary's Mum**  
**Sean Baker**  
**Gary's Dad**  
**David Michaels**  
**Mister Burger**  
**Robert Garrett**  
**Printer**  
**Ewen Cummins**  
**Mazda Salesman**  
**John Arthur**  
**Bank Manager**  
**Simon Firth**  
**BMW Salesman**  
**Heather Wright**  
**Angela**  
**Ian Tucker**  
**Orderly**  
**Arthur Sprockley**  
**Pensioner**  
**Peter Gaffney**  
**Don Basker**  
**Richard Ridings**  
**Kevin Hogg**  
**Nim Vithana**  
**Pria**  
**David Woodcock**  
**Martin Oldfield**  
**Businessmen**  
**Nicholas Blane**  
**Estate Agent**  
**Wolff Kahler**  
**George Schneider**  
**Veronica Roberts**  
**Hotel Receptionist**  
**Stefan Escroet**  
**Waiter**  
**James Noble**  
**Chauffeur**  
**Michael Richards**  
**Jason Farquharson**  
**Deborah Norton**  
**Denise McClaghan**  
**Julian Ball**  
**McClaghan's Assistant**  
**Colin Stinton**  
**Ted Liston**  
**John Hillner**  
**Ed Bloom**  
**Martin Short**  
**Harrison Killray**  
**Chris Peterson**  
**Marvin**  
**Stephen Geredon**  
**Photographer**  
**Fred Anderson**  
**Bellboy**  
**Lori Tan Chinn**  
**Chambermaid**

**Cast**  
**Christien Anholt**  
**Gary Worrall**  
**Jayne Ashbourne**  
**Lisa Armstrong**  
**Paul Reynolds**  
**Brian Thurrock**

Cheshire schoolboy Gary is a schoolboy obsessed with the financial world. He bets his best mate Brian a cheeseburger that he can make a million pounds in the week-long half-term holiday. After picking up a smart suit on credit, a radio pager on free trial and business cards in the invented name 'The October House Partnership', with Brian paging him every 15 minutes, Gary plays at being a

businessman. He picks up luxury cars for test drives and causes a stir in the financial world by showing interest in buying expensive properties.

Within days, Gary finds himself bidding a million pounds at an auction for the Cestrian home, a former local authority hospice. The idea is to be worth a million - if only for five seconds - and then be outbid, but he ends up with the property and no money to pay for it. While avoiding the auctioneer and being pursued by an American firm which is desperate for the Cestrian, Gary falls in love with Lisa, a nurse who worked at the hospice. He hires her as his personal assistant and tries to impress her that he is not in it for the money.

The American firm steps in, flies them both to New York in first class style, then reveals that it knows The October House Partnership to be a hoax. Humiliated but still with Lisa, Gary returns home to school and gets a job at the local burger stand to pay off the suit and buy Brian a cheeseburger.

Money For Nothing is a 90s version of the archetypal 80s boom odyssey - person makes good in the world of high finance but pays a price, thereby learning a moral lesson. With *Wall Street*, *Working Girl*, *The Secret of My Success*, *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*, 9 to 5 and others of previous decades such as *The Fountainhead* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, there are enough similar titles to argue for a business genre. Commonly, these films focus on the meaning of success, how to attain it and at what cost. For Gary, success means winning the bet - being worth a million pounds.

Like other central characters in these films, Gary is looking for a way to prove himself - to parents, to men in suits, to society. He particularly wants to impress his best friend and the woman he desires but, in the end, they want him to fail - it means he's still one of them. The genre always allows the central character an initial justification to match their initial success. Gary excuses his elaborate con by telling us that the money doesn't really exist and neither does he (as long as he's playing his alter ego). But of course he does, and that contradiction is where his - and the film's - problems are really located.

Gary falls in love not just with Lisa, but also with the businessman persona he puts on with his suit. Without it he is a nervous schoolboy, so to win Lisa he believes he has to keep up the pretence which leads to his ultimate humiliation. But being a feelgood film, *Money For Nothing* lets both its hero and high finance off the hook. The real life story of a British schoolboy who tried a similar kind of fraud ended with a custodial sentence. Gary is threatened with a similar fate in the courts, but ends up working in a burger bar. Business is shown to have heart and the film, having strung us along with splendid mounting tension, bursts like the South Sea Bubble.

Jes Benstock

# Royal Celebration

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Ferdinand Fairfax

**Distributor** BBC TV  
**Production Company** BBC Films  
**For Screen One**  
**Executive Producer** Richard Broke  
**Producer** Jacinta Peel  
**Associate Producer** Gillian McNeill  
**Production Manager** Tim Stevenson  
**Casting Adviser** Celestia Fox  
**Assistant Directors** David Mason  
**P.J. Simpson**  
**Melanie Panario**  
**Screenplay** William Humble  
**Director of Photography** Alec Curtis  
**In colour**  
**Editor** Mark Day  
**Production Designer** Anthony Ainsworth  
**Design Operative** Supervisor  
**Mike Hawkins**  
**Music** Anne Dudley  
**Ballet Choreography** Allison Allen  
**Costume Design** Colin Lavers  
**Make-up Design** Jane Walker  
**Dubbing Editors** Francesca Zeeman  
**Mark Gravit**  
**Sound Recordist** Derek Norman  
**Dolby stereo**  
**Dubbing Mixer** Colin Martin

**Cast**  
**Gaye Brown**  
**Anita**  
**Kenneth Cranham**  
**Douglas**  
**Minnie Driver**  
**Sally**  
**Caroline Goodall**  
**Mandy**  
**Rupert Graves**  
**Neil**  
**Peter Howitt**  
**Jim**  
**Leslie Phillips**  
**Johnny**  
**Catherine Humble**  
**Jackie**  
**Rosalind Knight**  
**Mrs Maynard**  
**Sadie Miller**  
**Penny**  
**Keira Knightley**  
**Angela**  
**Abby Ford**  
**Sandie**  
**Paul Egle**  
**Andrew**  
**Una Brandon-Jones**  
**Mandy Cheshire**  
**Michael Gaunt**  
**Gordon Salkild**  
**Sarah Nash**  
**Neighbours**

8,008 feet  
 (at 25 fps)  
 90 minutes

London, July 1981. On the day before Prince Charles marries Lady Diana, Sally decides to organise a street party for the residents of Worcester Gardens. It will also be a chance for her family - young daughter Penny, and Sally's new boyfriend Neil, a former City broker - to meet the neighbours. Sally's idea is greeted with some incredulity, but the next day, the party is taking place. For Mandy, the down-trodden wife of Jim, a brutalist property developer, the wedding provokes an emotional crisis. Douglas, an educa-

tionalist with a line in left-wing patter, sees the wedding as an opportunity to get drunk. Sandie, Mandy's disgruntled teenage daughter, who videotapes the wedding for a school sociology project, denounces it - and all proceedings linked to it - as a narcotic designed to deaden the impact of recession. Johnny Butler, an RAF-blazer veteran, gets patriotically plastered.

While Douglas tries to seduce Sally, Sandie and her two sisters spot their father on TV in the crowds outside Buckingham Palace; he is kissing a woman. Meanwhile, Mandy is in the kitchen, incoherent with tears and wine; Neil is trying to comfort her. Later, Sally confesses to Neil that, before they met, she had an affair with Douglas. Neil proposes to Sally and punches Douglas. A newly-confident Mandy joins the party. Sandie and her sisters confront Jim with the video evidence of his affair when he returns from a "hard day at the office". They force him, on pain of showing the tape to Mandy, to be nicer to their mother. Jim ends up driving his girls and Mandy to ballet classes. Mandy and Douglas start an affair and Neil gets a new City job.

With the exceptions of Johnny Butler and the ghastly Mrs Maynard, the characters in this vignette of urban village life are all too sophisticated to allow the prospect of the royal wedding to interfere with their lives. Butler, who wears an RAF blazer and whose sitting room boasts a shelf filled with mugs commemorating past royal events, toasts the couple with sherry as he watches the wedding on TV, sunk in a lachrymose haze. One suspects that Mrs Maynard, who will shortly devise a Sleeping Beauty tableau for her tiny charges, sees the wedding as an affirmation of God, Queen and Nation in the natural order. Her biscuit-tin pageantry-and-patriotism mixed assortment is interesting because the microcosm of the realm that is Worcester Gardens is in a severe state of disorder.

Royal weddings - like coronations and, to a much lesser degree, seasonal festivities - are extraordinary events which for ordinary people bring about



Send them victorious: Caroline Goodall, Peter Howitt



a hiatus in everyday life. Charles and Diana's do - "A more beautiful, fairy-tale marriage it would be hard to imagine," says Mrs Maynard - was the last such occasion to cause a rupture in public life, and, until the funerals of either Queen Elizabeth, it will continue to be so.

This Screen One film neatly captures the way that the wedding - disruptive in itself - mirrors the dislocation of the collective life of Worcester Gardens. "You haven't lived here long, have you?" Mandy asks Sally, when the latter enlists her for party duty. Indeed not. The communal life of Worcester Gardens is non-existent, as detailed shots of front doors, rooms and kitchens make us aware. Mrs Thatcher is two years into her reign: Jim, a blustering racist oik with aspirations to social elevation, is one of her natural children. Mandy, his wife, weeps behind doors and her sullen eldest has taken up sociology by way of combining teenage rebellion with a strategy for surviving family life. Neil, sacked from his broking job in the City after losing two million in a day's trading, is playing piano for Mrs Maynard.

Into this breezes Sally, a neo-hippie who could have been modelled on a Posy Simmonds cartoon character. She is, in a different way to Butler and Mrs Maynard, a loyal subject. She believes in the sort of uncomplicated community spirit which can raise a party before quietly disappearing back to whence it came. His ally in this ought, if perversity could be relied on, to be Douglas. His fluency in left-wing rhetoric should translate into some type of communal action, but it doesn't. Supine on a sofa, he analyses the wedding in terms similar to Sandie's. Sally's party, all vol-au-vents and circuses, is a product of false consciousness.

Yet the party is a success. The vol au vents get eaten. Along the trestle tables, local punks sit next to the woman whose net curtains twitch as pedestrians pass by her windows. Douglas is exposed as a revolutionary couch potato who regards adultery as his contribution to subversion.

Aptly, *Royal Celebration* is also about the presence of television, markedly so in Jim's case - his kiss is a counterpoint to that of the royal newlyweds. The other characters, as we do too, gather round their separate sets to view the wedding. Events in Worcester Gardens are paced by the ceremonials: there is a prelude, then high drama, followed by a resolution of sorts.

In the normal course of events, the pause in everyday life caused by occasions like royal weddings would be temporary. Life would slip back into its old routine. Not here - the twist in *Royal Celebration* is that small revolutions do take place. Jim's extramural activities are curbed under threat of exposure. Mandy gets the BMW and he the ballet run. Neil goes back to the City, we assume as a changed man. Small upheavals but pleasant ones: the product of a sardonic justice.

Louise Gray

## TV FILM

# Tender Loving Care

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Dewi Humphreys

<b>Distributor</b>	<b>Cast</b>
BBC TV	Dawn French
<b>Production Company</b>	Elaine Dobbs
BBC Wales	Rosemary Leach
For Screen One	Mary
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Robert Pugh
Ruth Caleb	Keith Dobbs
Richard Broke	Joan Sims
<b>Producer</b>	Daisy Potter
Louise Panton	Peter Jones
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Mr Davies
Dawn Walters	Llewellyn Rees
<b>Production Manager</b>	Mr Watkin
Andrew Collie	Patricia Kane
<b>Location Manager</b>	Mrs James
Sian Boobier	Alan ap Iwan
<b>Assistant Director</b>	David Charwood
Stephen Woolfenden	Stewart Jones
<b>Screenplay</b>	Mr Farmer
Lucy Gannon	Melanie Walters
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Sister Ann Munroe
Rex Maidment	Christine Pritchard
In colour	Nursing Officer
<b>Graphic Designer</b>	Cherry Yeoman
Louise Hillam	Gael Nayar
<b>Editor</b>	Student Nurse Nuli
John Richards	Ranjit Krishnamma
<b>Production Designer</b>	Doctor Swindra
Venita Gribble	Steven Spiers
<b>Music</b>	Porter
Ray Singer	Nicholas McGaughey
<b>Costume Design</b>	Security Man
Sarah Melvin	Sian Rivers
<b>Make-up</b>	Nurse Sian Pryce
Marina Manios	Striel Jenkins
Stephen Williams	Student Nurse
<b>Sound Editor</b>	Richard Goodfield
Paul Jefferies	Ambulance Man
<b>Sound Recordist</b>	Gwyn Vaughan-Jones
Richard Dyer	Pastor
<b>Sound Re-recordist</b>	Bernard Lathan
Tim Ricketts	Policeman
<b>Medical Advisor</b>	Gary Llewellyn
Jane Ellaway	Gwilym Morris
	Binmen
	Gemma Jones
	Nicky Dobbs
	Marc Heatley
	Phil Dobbs

7,002 feet  
(at 25 fps)  
75 minutes

Elaine is a tired, compassionate nurse who has been doing the night shift on the geriatric ward for five years, together with Mary, an older woman. Elaine wants to train as an RGN, but despite her good record she has been passed over in favour of an inexperienced newcomer. She has frustrations at home as well, where she is irritated by the practical jokes and unfinished DIY of her loving husband. However, Elaine has her own secret way of asserting some authority. When a patient is terminally ill, she administers a fatal drug dose to speed the end of their suffering. One night Elaine finds that Mary has discovered her secret, and has been helping to hide any evidence from the hospital authorities. Mary tells Elaine to trust her and offers to help.

Elaine wants to carry on work as usual, but now that they have discussed euthanasia, Mary develops a morbid fascination with killing the patients. She suggests they finish off a couple of annoying patients who are not actually dying. Elaine refuses, shocked at the idea. One evening, when a male prostitute is brought into

the ward for the night, Mary sneers at the man in disgust. While Elaine is in the canteen, he approaches Mary to ask where the toilets are. Mary attacks him, calling him a pervert and bludgeoning him to death in the shower. Elaine is horrified, but helps cover up Mary's actions by pretending that an intruder broke in and committed the murder.

Elaine gets increasingly worried by the disorder in her life. Her husband has tried to cheer her up with a weekend away, but Elaine refused to stay in the poky caravan and demanded to go home to relax. Home, though, provides little peace and quiet, as the children have heard about the hospital murder and are curious to hear their mother's story. Meanwhile, Elaine's neighbour Daisy has been admitted to hospital for a routine operation, and Elaine has been very supportive. But when Daisy's illness escalates she is admitted to the geriatric ward, where she cries in her sleep from fear. This annoys Mary, who proposes that they kill her. Elaine refuses, very worried about Mary's murderous habits. When their shift ends, Elaine goes back to Mary's for a sherry. She hides in the house, and when Mary is asleep, dresses in a surgeon's outfit and kills Mary by hitting her with a heavy weight. After feigning a burglary, Elaine leaves, carefully disposing of all the evidence. That night, as staff get anxious about Mary's absence, Elaine realises that Daisy is not going to get better, and she prepares the drugs necessary to induce euthanasia.

*Tender Loving Care* might be an provocative title for a film which deals with a controversial subject. But actually it comes across as a bad joke, because, for a TV audience, attention is focused less on euthanasia than on the question of whether or not Dawn French can carry off a serious role. Although she does well as harassed, stoical Elaine, it is impossible to close down the gap between the character and French's more familiar comic persona. Waiting for laughs that don't come makes this slow-moving film seem very long.

*Tender Loving Care* explores the complexity of killing. Elaine is sympathetically filmed as a tender nurse and mother, and the camera gets in extra close for the first killings, sharing the act of kindness. But once Mary finds out, Elaine has to break the night-time silence, justifying in slippery words what seemed acceptable in compassionate images. Looking shifty, she explains that she is "taking charge, being responsible". She sees her methodical killing as a sign of nursing commitment, a matter of clinical precision. Although discomfited, we are consoled that at least the power of life and death is in sensible hands. But power corrupts, and Mary's lust for death quickly reveals that, in her case, power is in the hands of a true nutter. When she kills the prostitute, the close-up camerawork is extremely violent, enforcing our own collusion in



Compassion play: Dawn French

the horrible act. "It's so senseless," protests Elaine, discovering the crime. In reply, mad-eyed Mary spouts about pervers and retribution, her prejudice digging a grave for her. Her own death has a horrible comedy to it. She sits up in bed to find Elaine leaning over her, dressed as a surgeon. Her last, perplexed words are "Am I ill?" and clearly, yes, she is very sick indeed.

Mary has literally made a bloody mess of things, and is tidied away with Elaine's usual efficiency. But her death chillingly blurs the moral distinction between murder and euthanasia. Elaine's compassion becomes ominous; as she leans towards Daisy, we have learnt to doubt the tenderness of the close-up.

In church, where she learnt her intolerance, Mary remarks that night shifts make you feel "separate, special," divorced from the everyday world, which clear bright tones and perky dialogue distinguish utterly from Mary and Elaine's night ward. But once the deaths are personalised - in the case of Mary and Daisy - they become disturbingly social crimes, rather than solitary acts of compassion in the night. Mercy killings or calculated murder? The uncertainty of perspective is never quite resolved, leaving the moral question hanging, and the BBC off the hook.

Hospitals are a good place for people to get bumped off in the night. From the first scene, the camera slides up and down the darkened ward accompanied by tension-mounting, tingling music. The film is set up like a cross between TV hospital drama (*Casualty*-style tension among the carers, life-and-death scenarios an everyday reality for pithy doctors and nurses), and Hollywood suspense scarer (over-sized shadows playing on the hospital curtains and sharp angles inviting the peeping eye). But in trying to make a thriller out of a drama, the film blunts the point of the screenplay; and *Tender Loving Care* is less likely to provoke debate about euthanasia than to put the elderly off going into hospital for their hip replacements.

Lucy Richer



# VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and Peter Dean new retail videos

## JANUARY VIDEO CHOICE



What's bugging Cathy Moriarty?: 'Matinee'

### Matinee

Director Joe Dante/USA 1993

Set in Key West during the Cuban missile crisis, this loving homage to the golden age of horror pays tribute to the legendary figure of B-movie magnate William Castle, while simultaneously exploring the motivations behind audiences' desire to experience terror in the cinema. John Goodman is perfectly cast as schlock-meister Lawrence Woolsey - creator of such gimmicks as 'Rumble Rama' and 'Atomo Vision' - who brings to town his latest creation ("Mant! Half man, half ant, all terror!"). Avoiding the cliché of representing 50s and 60s chillers as

cheap and shoddy, Dante pays close attention to recreating authentic period special effects which tread a thin line between the sublime and the ridiculous (in fact Dante's efforts were so successful that he has subsequently been offered financing to complete 'Mant' as a short film for inclusion on future video releases). Concluding that horror entertainment provides a safe refuge for those beset by the terrors of the real world, Dante offers a strong argument against the current criticism of horror movies as a cause (rather than a cure) for the modern malaise. Witty, uplifting and fun. (S&S June 1993)

● Rental: Guild G8711; Certificate PG



Escape from Hell: Jason Scott Lee

### Map of the Human Heart

Director Vincent Ward/UK/Australia 1992

Avik (Jason Scott Lee), an Eskimo boy, is taken from his home in the Arctic in a "flying bird" by a white explorer, Walter (Patrick Bergin), wanting to cure the boy's TB. While recovering in a Montreal hospital, Avik befriends Albertine (Anne Parillaud), a half-caste American Indian. World War Two brings Avik, Albertine and Walter together again, but their friendship is blurred by passion and confused national allegiances. An astonishingly ambitious and frequently breathtaking work, Ward's masterpiece

plays on a map-making allegory - for Walter a map is a battle plan, a guide to conquest and seduction; for Avik it represents the Westernisation of himself and his land. The thematic substance is overshadowed by the film's visual splendour. Although Ward struggled through numerous re-edits to arrive at a final cut, this still resembles an unfinished work in progress. The video would have benefitted from a widescreen format but still succeeds in pan and scan. A wonderful work of art. (S&S June 1993)

● Rental: 20.20 Vision NVT 1592; Certificate 15

### Body Snatchers

Director Abel Ferrara/USA 1993

Ferrara's update of Jack Finney's classic tale of urban paranoia is a gem which seduces the eye, captures the imagination and makes the adrenalin race. Although fitting uneasily into an auteurist schema of Ferrara's work (it's his first to be inspired by sources other than his own), the film retains a distinctive bite, using Finney's framework to explore long-standing Ferrara obsessions such as loss of identity and the breakdown of society. Stylistically the film reflects Ferrara's back catalogue (the lush grittiness of *China Girl* for example) rather than the sci-fi tradition. Lavishly photographed by Bojan Bazelli, *Body Snatchers* explores a contradictory world where glossy surface appearances jar with harsh underlying realities. Meg Tilly stands out from the solid cast, with Ferrara using her spacey quality to fine effect. Tilly powerfully portrays lifelessness in a manner which is credible and chilling, rather than falling back on zombie clichés. This is a worthy successor to the two previous cinema versions, as well as an insightful re-reading of Finney's seminal text.

● Rental: Warner V013027;

Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Robert H. Solo; Screenplay Stuart Gordon, Dennis Paoli, Nicholas St. John; Lead Actors Meg Tilly, Gabrielle Anwar, Terry Kinney, Billy Wirth



Nearly human: 'Body Snatchers'

### La Vie est belle

Directors Benoît Lamy, Ngangura Mweze/Belgium/France/Zaire 1987

Refreshingly different and uplifting musical comedy set in Kinshasa, with recording artist Papa Wemba playing a village musician who dreams of having his own band. Wemba becomes a servant to a rich disco owner, imitates him while he is away on business and woos a beautiful woman. The disco owner then takes the object of Wemba's affections as his second wife, setting in motion a genuinely funny farce with plot twists and character motivations different from Western archetypes. (MFB No. 667)

● Retail: Sterns STV 6001; Price £12.99; Subtitles: Certificate PG



Kinshasa belle



## The Wages of Fear (Le Salaire de la peur)

Director Henri-Georges Clouzot  
France 1953

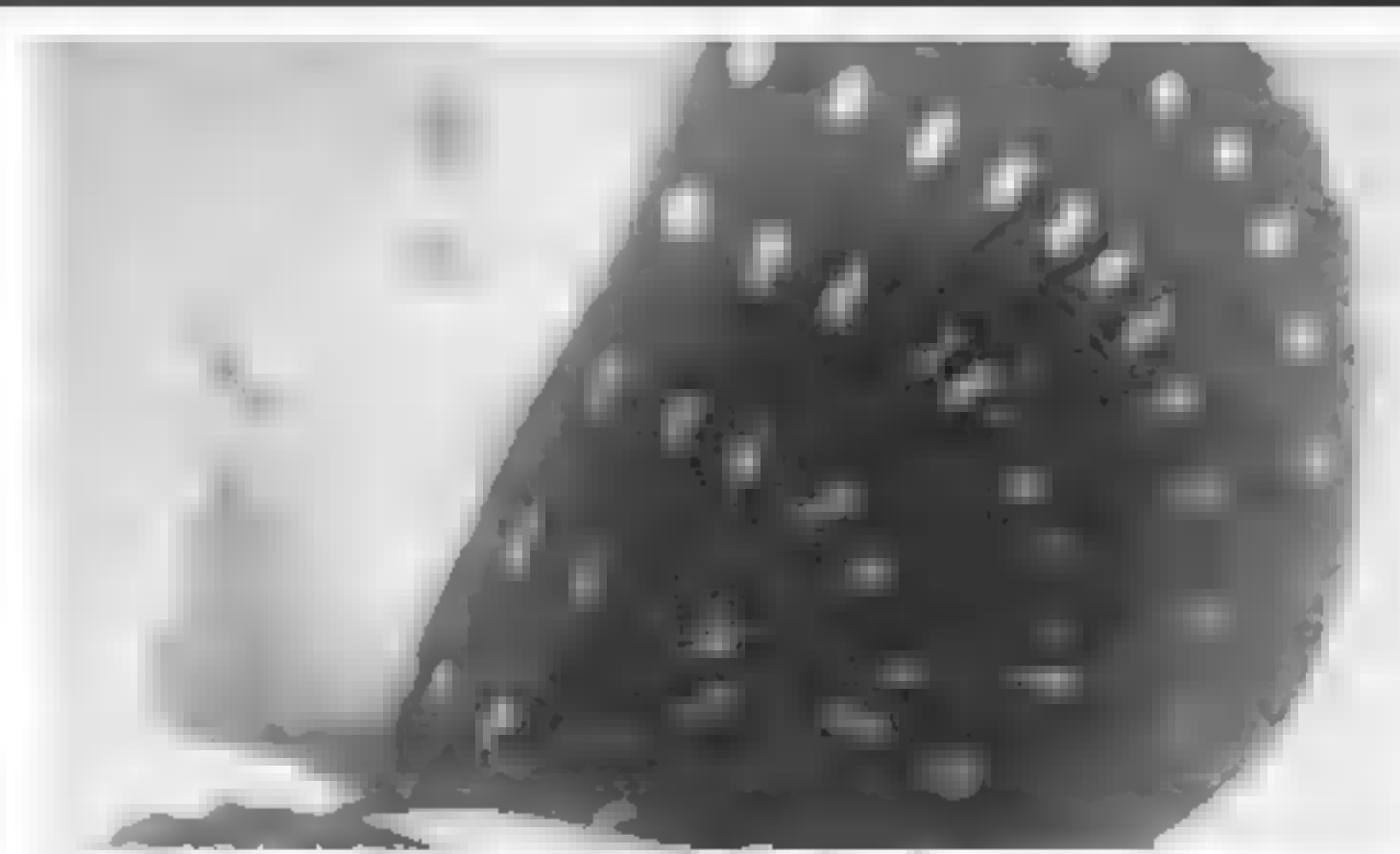
Welcome video debut of Clouzot's great suspense film in which four men drive two trucks full of nitroglycerine 300 miles to put out a blazing oil-well fire. Their aim is to get out of a hell-hole



Off the beaten track: 'The Wages of Fear'

Central American village, Las Piedras, with various obstacles blocking their path, including a rickety wooden bridge over a ravine, a large boulder, an oil swamp and the greatest danger – their own fear. This is the longest version available. Not to be confused with William Friedkin's limp 1977 remake *Sorcerer*. (MFB No. 243)

● Retail; Arrow AV 002; Price £15.99; B/W Subtitles; Certificate PG



On the road: 'North of Vortex'

## North of Vortex

Director Constantine Giannaris/UK 1991

A European poet drives west from New York in a convertible, picking up a hitchhiking sailor and a short-order waitress. Accompanied by a moody jazz soundtrack, this avant garde short seems content to show off its admirable black and white photography rather than get under the skin of the travellers' drug-taking, sexual rituals and role-playing. Similar to *The Living End* in its explicit homo-erotic version of the buddy road movie, it veers stylistically between Jim Jarmusch and Andy Warhol. Pretentious, perhaps, but strikingly filmed and composed enough to suggest the emergence of a major talent.

● Retail; Western Connection WEST 008; Price £14.99; Certificate 18; 56 minutes; B/W Subtitles; Producer Rebecca Dobbs; Screenplay Constantine Giannaris; Lead Actors Stavros Zalmas, Howard Napper, Valda Drabla

## Lights of Variety (Luci del varietà)

Directors Federico Fellini, Alberto Lattuada  
Italy 1950

Fellini's first feature is fittingly based on the third-rate variety acts he wrote songs and sketches for as a youth, and whose motley collection of human misfits he would often refer back to. A pretty dancer runs away with a group of music-hall players, becoming the star of the show and leading the manager astray by playing on his dreams of escaping artistic mediocrity. The scene in which the troupe descends on an admirer and eats him out of house and home is a gem. Not to be missed. (MFB No. 322)

● Retail; Connoisseur Video CR 110; Price £15.99; B/W Subtitles; Certificate PG



Giulietta Masina in 'Lights of Variety'

## Equinox

Director Alan Rudolph/USA 1992

Why is Alan Rudolph ignored at the box-office? This riveting psychological fantasy proves that even with a complicated narrative Rudolph can seduce and captivate. Set in a non-specific future, *Equinox* spirals around two characters – both superbly played by Matthew Modine – who represent warring sides of a fractured personality. Henry Petosa is crippled by shyness and hesitation, which stifles his virtually dormant relationship with his 'girlfriend' (Lara Flynn Boyle). Meanwhile gangster Freddy Ace violently climbs the

ladder toward underworld notoriety. Gradually, the lives of the disparate doubles begin to intersect. This is perhaps Rudolph's finest work to date, a labour of love made under conditions which, for once, guaranteed him total artistic control. Littered with subtle visual leitmotifs which emphasise the core theme of hidden duality, *Equinox* is a film which needs several viewings to be appreciated. Although the battle between light and dark is obvious, the finer touches are buried in the visual tapestry to be discovered by the devoted (perhaps obsessive) viewer. Make the effort as the rewards are plentiful. (S&S July 1993)

● Rental; Guild G8733; Certificate 15



Twin pique: Matthew Modine in 'Equinox'



'Bloodstone': ghoulish charmer

## Bloodstone: Subspecies 2

Director Ted Nicolaou/USA 1993

Nicolaou's ghoulish gothic charmer, although trashy, marks something of a breakthrough for the independent company Full Moon Productions as this is their first picture to gain a theatrical release in the US. A vampire (Anders Hove) struggles to convert a woman (Denise Duff) to the dark side to gain control of a legendary bloodstone. Driven by his psychopathic witch mother, the vampire pursues a relentless path of damnation and destruction. Broodingly photographed by Vlad Paunescu, and benefitting from some sprightly make-up effects by the Alchemyfx team, *Bloodstone* looks like an Italian *giallo* rather than a mainstream American chiller. Shot on location in Romania with local technicians and actors, the film features enough decapitations (and, bizarrely, re-capitations) to keep the gore hounds happy, while conveying an alluring art-house look.

● Rental; Full Moon Entertainment FME1 101; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producer Vlad Paunescu; Screenplay Ted Nicolaou; Lead Actors Anders Hove, Denise Duff, Kevin Blair, Melanie Shatner

## The White Sheik (Lo sceicco bianco)

Director Federico Fellini/Italy 1952

Fellini's first solo film bears many of the hallmarks of his later work, with themes involving the lure of popular culture, the shattering of illusions, vain hopes and dreams and a collection of characters who border on the grotesque. The director's stylistic traits, such as the haunting sound of the wind on the beach, make their first appearance. A newlywed couple arrive in Rome, with the woman dashing off to meet her idol on a photo shoot and the man comically struggling to explain her absence to his austere uncle. Very funny, with some superb touches.

● Retail; Connoisseur Video CR 109; Price £15.99; 86 minutes; B/W Subtitles; Certificate U; Producer Luigi Rovere; Screenplay Federico Fellini, Tullio Pinelli, Ennio Flaiano; Lead Actors Brunella Bovo, Alberto Sordi, Leopoldo Trieste, Giulietta Masina



Pronto!: 'The White Sheik'



Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

# Rental

**Benny and Joon**

Director Jeremiah Chechik; USA 1993; Warner V053007; Certificate PG  
A wide-eyed romantic comedy-drama which annoyingly plays on the idea that what the mentally disturbed need is to have a kooky love affair. The usually excellent Johnny Depp hams it up as a Buster Keaton act-alike who wins Mary Stuart Masterson's heart. The film relaunched pop group The Proclaimers' career by using "I'm Gonna Be" as its theme tune. (S&S July 1993)

**Cliffhanger**

Director Renny Harlin; USA 1993; Guild G8710; Certificate 15  
Harlin's narratively challenged action adventure loses much of its vertiginous terror away from the big screen. The opening sequence, in which a climber falls to her death, still looks spectacular but the rest of the movie lacks bite. Reliable Sylvester Stallone stars as a mountain rescuer haunted by a past tragedy. Michael Rooker is terrific as his troubled, estranged partner and John Lithgow as the bad guy adopts the obligatory fiendish English accent. (S&S July 1993)

**Crush**

Director Alison Maclean; New Zealand 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1028; Certificate 15  
After crashing her car and leaving her travelling companion critically injured, a young American woman (Marcia Gay Harden) keeps her friend's appointment with a novelist, embarking on a voyage of twisted sexual revenge. Maclean conjures up an eerie atmosphere, heavy with the threat of violence (psychological and physical). Harden handles the deranged lead role with aplomb. (S&S April 1993)

**Falling Down**

Director Joel Schumacher; USA 1992; Warner V012648; Certificate 18  
Breaking away from the usual sludge for which Schumacher has recently been responsible, this tale of an urban stuffed-shirt cracking under pressure works best when taken as a ghoulish black comedy. Cheer as the office worker from hell takes to the streets with an assortment of guns, seeking revenge on the world. Worth noting that the only person D-Fens (Michael Douglas) kills is a psychopathic fascist, thus leaving the merest trace of political correctness. Undeniable fun. (S&S June 1993) □

**Fire in the Sky**

Director Robert Lieberman; USA 1993; CIC Video VHB 2776; Certificate 15  
Adaptation of a true story about a young man who is abducted by space aliens. The finest sequence occurs in the spaceship where Whitley Strieber-esque bug-eyed monsters stick hideous eye-probes into our hero, but sadly, while the

earthbound material is relatively factual, this episode turns out to be the film-makers' invention. Strong performances by D.B. Sweeney, Craig Sheffer and Robert Patrick keep things credible. (S&S July 1993)

**Groundhog Day**

Director Harold Ramis; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 14594; Certificate PG  
Oh what a joy! Bill Murray is wonderfully sardonic in Ramis' beautifully pitched romantic fantasy. Snowbound in Punxsatawney, Pennsylvania during the annual Groundhog Festival, newsman Phil Connors (Murray) is forced to relive the same day over and over until he discovers true love. Murray plays it delightfully deadpan, Andie MacDowell is excellent as the object of his affections, and the laughs are heartfelt without ever being cute. (S&S May 1993) □

**Last Action Hero**

Director John McTiernan; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 19669; Certificate 15  
Shane Black and David Arnott's script inventively juggles fact and fiction as a young boy is sucked into the celluloid world of his screen hero Jack Slater (Arnold Schwarzenegger). Things get even better as the fictional characters break through to the real world in pursuit of a spectacularly fiendish Charles Dance. Intelligent entertainment ripe for reassessment. (S&S August 1993)

**Rich in Love**

Director Bruce Beresford; USA 1992; Warner V052961; Certificate PG  
A tiresome drama about family ties and crises. Teenage Lucille Odom (Kathryn Erbe) looks after her grouchy father (Albert Finney) when her mother (Jill Clayburgh) leaves home. Old rivalries and new devotions surface as the clan rallies round. The tidy ending comes as no surprise. (S&S May 1993)

**The Snapper**

Director Stephen Frears; UK 1993; Electric Pictures EP 0050; Certificate 15  
Excellent TV movie about the effect of an unwanted teenage pregnancy on a large Irish Catholic family living on a poor housing estate. With suspicions pointing at a loathed middle-aged neighbour, the scene is set for plenty of shenanigans and unforgettable one-liners. A real treat of a film which is superbly acted and directed. (S&S June 1993)



Rodent movie: 'Groundhog Day'

**South Central**

Director Steve Anderson; USA 1992; Warner V012594; Certificate 15  
Young film-maker Steve Anderson's adaptation of Donald Baker's book Crips packs a punch, effectively evoking the oppressive milieu of life in Los Angeles' notorious ghetto. While there are signs of a maturing talent, the overall tone of this Oliver Stone executive-produced drama is hyperbolic and wearisome. But expect more impressive work from Anderson in the future. (S&S July 1993)

**Swing Kids**

Director Thomas Carter; USA 1993; Hollywood HP 7943; Certificate 15  
Enthusiastic followers of jazz challenge the rise of Nazism in pre-war Germany. An oddball hybrid, impressively played by an ensemble cast (Robert Sean Leonard, Christian Bale, Barbara Hershey) but lacking a sense of direction. Nice music, though. (S&S July 1993)

**Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III**

Director Stuart Gillard; USA 1992; FoxVideo 1999; Certificate PG  
Inept third instalment in the tedious turtles saga which moves the modern day urban setting (the turtles' one saving grace) to seventeenth-century Japan where very little happens. (S&S August 1993)

**Three of Hearts**

Director Yurek Bogayevicz; USA 1992; Guild G8726; Certificate 18  
After failing to make an impact in the States, Bogayevicz's coyly bisexual comedy was re-edited for the UK, and a crowd-pleasing upbeat ending was added with William Baldwin and Sherilyn Fenn making up - to no avail, as the film died here as well. The video version adds the original American ending with Kelly Lynch resolving to help Baldwin win back Fenn. There's very little difference between the two (lesbianism gets the thumbs down in both versions) and little to recommend. (S&S August 1993)

# Rental Premiere

**Blindsided**

Director Tom Donnelly; USA 1993; CIC Video VHA 1652; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer Oscar L. Costo; Screenplay Tom Donnelly; Lead Actors Jeff Fahey, Mia Sarah, Ben Gazzara  
A lively derivative of the erotic thriller genre. A bitter ex-cop (Fahey), who steals from money-laundering operations, teams up with an ex-gangster's moll (Sarah). They both attempt to escape the traumas of their respective pasts.

**Cthulhu Mansion**

Director J.P. Simon; USA 1991; First Independent VA 20203; Certificate 18; 92 minutes; Producers Jose G. Maesso, J.P. Simon; Screenplay J.P. Simon; Lead Actors Frank Finlay, Marcia Layton, Brad Fisher, Melanie Shatner  
As with nearly all H.P. Lovecraft-inspired horror movies, this bears little relation to the original work. Frank Finlay wanders through the supernatural hokum with the air of a man gracefully paying the rent. The first hour veers between the uninteresting and the ridiculous (large monster hands drag teenagers into a

fridge, packets of cocaine zip round on the end of fishing wire) but the second half picks up steam with a few grungy effects. Genre buffs can play spot-the-plagiarism from films such as Carrie, The Evil Dead and The Exorcist.

**The Crystal Eye**

Director Joe Tornatore; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVT 21463; Certificate PG; 82 minutes; Producers Robert Patterson, Maurice Smith; Screenplay Mike Angel; Lead Actors Jameson Parker, Cynthia Rhodes, Mike Lane, David Sherwood  
Sub-Indiana Jones action-adventure for all the family. Rugged gunrunner Luke Ward (Parker) searches for the the lost treasure of Ali Baba, but ancient curses and marauding foreigners stand between him and the fortune.

**Cyborg II**

Director Michael Schroeder; USA 1993; PolyGram Video PG 1008; Certificate 18; 95 minutes; Producers Raju Patel, Alain Silver; Screenplay Michael Schroeder, Ron Yanover; Lead Actors Elias Koteas, Billy Drago, Angelina Jolie, Jack Palance  
The inevitable sequel to the 1990 sci-fi-action vehicle which made Jean Claude Van Damme a rental premiere star. With the world's leading Belgian now gone, this second instalment shows a host of celebrity faces (Palance appears on a video screen) to fill the gap. Schroeder directs with a degree of visual panache and the special effects are passable, but overall it lacks a firm plot.

**Frozen Assets**

Director George Miller; USA 1992; 20.20 Vision NVT 20692; Certificate 15; 95 minutes; Producer Don Klein; Screenplay Don Klein, Tom Kartoizian; Lead Actors Shelley Long, Corbin Bernsen, Larry Miller, Dody Goodman  
George Miller turns in an uneven romp set in a sperm bank. Shelley Long battles in her role as long-serving bank proprietor whose position is usurped by the arrival from the city of a new leader who believes he is going to work in a financial bank. Inevitably, he tries to sell the sperm for a profit and they fall in love. Not as awful as it sounds.

**Interceptor**

Director Michael Cohn; USA 1992; CIC Video VHA 1658; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producers Kevin S. Kalberg, Oliver G. Hess; Screenplay John Brancato, Michael Ferris; Lead Actors Andrew Divoff, Jurgen Prochnow, Elisabeth Morehead  
Airborne action-adventure, plugging somewhat belatedly into the well-worn virtual reality gimmick. Captain Chris Winfield (Divoff) and Janet Morgan (Morehead) fend off skyjackers attempting to capture their air force stealth fighter. Computer screen pyrotechnics ensue.

**Joshua Tree**

Director Vic Armstrong; USA 1993; EV EVV 1240; Certificate 18; 94 minutes; Producer Ilana Diamond; Screenplay Steven Pressfield; Lead Actors Dolph Lundgren, George Segal, Kristian Alfonso, Michelle Phillips  
Leading stunt co-ordinator Vic Armstrong proves his directorial mettle with this serviceable action-suspense pic. An ex-racing driver and prison escapee (Lundgren) steals a car from an attractive deputy sheriff. The two form an uneasy bond as they race the police through deserts and cityscapes. Lundgren



## Philip Kemp on the extended adolescence of François Truffaut

# This boy's life

Strange, as somebody once remarked, how many delightful children grow up to be such disappointing adults. The career of François Truffaut prompts similar reflections. Truffaut's early work is deeply rooted in childhood. Before he became a director he was the feared *enfant terrible* of *Cahiers du cinéma*, gleefully lambasting his cinematic elders, the purveyors of the ossified *cinéma de papa*. In his short, *Les Mistons* (1957), a group of pre-adolescent boys, fascinated and disturbed by emotions they can't yet grasp, torment a pair of lovers. The prime focus of their pestering, though, is the young woman, for whom they feel desire without daring to admit it. This view of women as elusive, puzzling and disruptive was one Truffaut never quite grew out of.

For his first feature, *Les quatre cents coups* (1959), Truffaut drew strongly on his own disaffected, quasi-orphaned upbringing. Yet there's not a trace of self-pity: the film is fresh, funny, bleak and wholly unsentimental, one of the most direct and honest depictions of childhood ever screened. From the 13-year-old Jean-Pierre L  aud, who had never acted before in films, Truffaut coaxed a devastatingly matter-of-fact performance as the director's alter ego, Antoine Doinel.

For all his attacks on tradition, Truffaut was never given to stylistic experimentation, the way his *nouvelle vague* colleagues Godard and Resnais were. Even so, in his early work there is a boyish exuberance, an infectious delight in playing with the conventions of the medium. *Tirez sur le pianiste* (1960) bubbles with visual gags, splicing pathos and farce, mocking the absurdities of its own plot, in a conscious tightrope act that never quite topples into inconsequentiality. *Jules et Jim* (1961) swirls something of the same mix of exhilaration and melancholy into a rhapsodic, elegiac study of a three-way love affair buoyed by tenderness and doomed by discontent. Truffaut's sweeping, fluid camera was never put to better use than in the summer-time lyricism of the trio's bicycle expedition, wafted by Georges Delerue's lilting waltz theme: the screen epitome of piercing, evanescent joy.

### Childhood, boyhood, youth

But from here on, it was as if something of that same evanescence began to infect Truffaut's work. Only intermittently was he able to recapture the sense of youthful elan, even though he kept revisiting the same childhood wellspring. He followed Antoine Doinel through four more films, of which the best is the first and shortest, *Antoine et Colette* (1962), designed as an episode for the compilation film *L'Amour    vingt ans*. Thereafter the Doinel character drifted steadily away from present-day reality. *Baisers vol  s* (1968) and *Domicile conjugal* (1970) are long on charm, locating Doinel among a cast of wacky characters in communal courtyards harking back to



Fran  ois Truffaut: escape into the screen

30s French cinema – Renoir's *Le Crime de M. Lange* or Ren   Clair's *Le Million*. *L'Amour en fuite* (1979) seems fuelled by Truffaut's panic as much as Doinel's, riffing desperately back through out-takes from the earlier films in the cycle as though seeking a point of purchase.

Truffaut's most disillusioned take on the subject of childhood is *L'Enfant sauvage* (1969). Based on the true eighteenth-century story of the Wild Child of Aveyron, a 12-year-old boy found roaming naked and speechless in the woods, the film traces his education at the hands of a scientist, Dr Itard. The irony lies in the disparity between Itard's cool, rational voice-over and the exposure of the process of 'civilisation' – for which read bringing up – as one of betrayal. Significantly, Truffaut himself plays Itard and the film is dedicated to L  aud. As if dismayed by his own candour, Truffaut pulled back: his last film about children, *L'Argent de poche* (1976), is cosy and cute, a million miles from the dispassionate gaze of *Les quatre cents coups*.

The underlying bent of Truffaut's vision is essentially melancholic – his attempts at sunny optimism, as in *L'Argent de poche*, or at raucous humour as in *Une belle fille comme moi* (1972) feel forced and hollow. Even behind the high spirits of his early work there lurks a reserve, an emotional reticence and a sense of loss. This graver side came increasingly to the fore, through the wistful tragi-comedy of *Deux anglaises et le continent* (1971) – the love-triangle of *Jules et Jim* reversed and shadowed by regret – and the deranged, obsessive passion of *L'Histoire d'Ad  le H* (1975), to his darkest film, *La Chambre verte* (1978). Adapted from Henry James, this is a sombre, austere study of a man who devotes his whole existence to the memory of the dead. Here, as in *L'Enfant sauvage*, Truffaut plays his own protagonist, making the film's personal import inescapable.

Romantic obsession, whether with the living or the dead, is the key emotional configuration of Truffaut's films. The passion may be one-sided, as in *La Peau douce* (1964), a sensitive account of an ill-starred adulterous affair, or totally unreciprocated, as in *Ad  le H*. It may be vengeful, as in Jeanne Moreau tracking down her husband's killers in the would-be Hitchcockian *La Mari  e   tait en noir*

(1967), or built on delusion: the more the hero of *La Sir  ne du Mississippi* (1969) is duped by his *femme fatale*, the more determined becomes his pursuit. Or the passion may be mutual but nonetheless totally destructive, as with the lovers of *La Femme d'  c  t  * (1981), whose *amour fou* wrecks both their marriages and ends in death. In all these films, reality collides with a romantically rearranged version, and it's generally reality that loses out.

### Screening out reality

"Are films more important than life?" The question posed by the temperamental young film star (played, again, by Jean-Pierre L  aud) in *La Nuit am  ricaine* (1973) echoes with peculiar relevance through the work of a man who named his two daughters (Eve and Laura) after movies. Repeatedly in his films Truffaut reinvented his own life as fiction, and his protagonists too are constantly fictionalising themselves. The hero of *Tirez sur le pianiste* creates a new identity; in *L'Amour en fuite* Doinel turns his string of love affairs into a novel, as does the hero of *L'Homme qui aimait les femmes* (1977) – surely Truffaut's least appealing film, with its overindulgent study of a womaniser.

At times, particularly in his later films, Truffaut seemed prone to retreat from life into the movies. The reluctance to engage with politics that mars *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) becomes ludicrous in *Le Dernier M  tro* (1980), where the German occupation is reduced to an atmospheric backdrop. Yet the hazardous interface between life and cinema also produced the masterpiece of the latter half of his career. *La Nuit am  ricaine*, one of the great movies-on-movie-making, radiates the sheer joy of film-making that Truffaut never lost, even at his blandest. And at one point it again directly touches the childhood source of his inspiration. While the rest of the cast and crew eagerly bed-hop, we see the film's director – played, of course, by Truffaut himself – sleeping alone in a narrow bed. And dreaming: of the same movie-mad young boy we met in *Les quatre cents coups*, creeping out at night to steal lobby cards from the local movie-house.

'*Jules et Jim*', '*Le Dernier M  tro*' and '*Les quatre cents coups*/'*Les Mistons*' are available on video from Artificial Eye. Artificial Eye will be releasing further Truffaut films early next year.

continues to mature as an actor and Armstrong makes excellent use of locations and stunts.

### The Last Hit

Director Jan Egleson; USA 1993; CIC Video VHA 1659; Certificate 15; 88 minutes; Producers Rob Christiansen, Rob Rosenberg; Screenplay Walter Klenhard, Alan Sharp; Lead Actors Bryan Brown, Brooke Adams, Harris Yulin A Vietnam deserter (Brown) is offered amnesty in return for his services as an assassin. After finding his first killings easy, things turn sour when he falls in love with the daughter of a target.

### Live by the Fist

Director Cirio H. Santiago; USA 1993; Imperial Entertainment IMP 134; Certificate 18; 77 minutes; Producer Cirio H. Santiago; Screenplay Charles Philip Moore; Lead Actors Jerry Trimble, George Takei, Ted Markland, Laura Albert

By-numbers fists-and-feet movie from the Roger Corman stable. Kickboxing champion Trimble fights for his life behind prison bars, aided by the philosophical support offered by an elderly inmate.

### Lucky Luke

Director Terence Hill; Italy/USA 1990; First Independent VA 20202; Certificate U; 86 minutes; Producers Paloma Films, Aetitalia; Screenplay Lori Hill; Lead Actors Terence Hill, Nancy Morgan, Ron Carey, Fritz Sperberg

Adapted from the Morris and Goscinny comic strip which never really took off on these shores. Lucky Luke and his trusty steed Jolly Jumper strive to clean up the Wild West town of Daisy.

### Married to It

Director Arthur Hiller; USA 1991; 20.20 Vision NVT 79482; Certificate 15; 107 minutes; Producer Thomas Baer; Screenplay Janet Kovalcik; Lead Actors Cybill Shepherd, Ron Silver, Beau Bridges, Stockard Channing, Mary Stuart Masterson

Three couples endure the trials and tribulations of married life in this entertaining but derivative (*The Big Chill*, *Grand Canyon*, *Husbands and Wives*) drama for the thirtysomething audience. A dinner party for a group of friends from varying circumstances exposes emotional wounds. The cast buzzes but the idea is unoriginal.

### Solar Crisis

Director Alan Smithee; USA 1992; EV EVV 1252; Certificate 15; 107 minutes; Producers Richard Edlund, James Nelson, Morris Morishima; Screenplay Joe Gannon, Crispian Bolt; Lead Actors Tim Matheson, Charlton Heston, Peter Boyle, Jack Palance

Special effects dominate this relatively expensive (\$35 million) sci-fi pic which was disowned by its director (hence 'Smithee' credit) after extensive post-production wranglings, and which met with critical derision on its release. Set in the future, warring nations unite to construct an anti-matter bomb to halt solar storms on the sun's surface. Moments of visual impressiveness are swamped by the incoherent narrative.

### The Temp

Director Tom Holland; USA 1993; CIC Video VHB 2751; Certificate 15; 93 minutes; Producers Tom Engelman, David Permut; Screenplay Kevin Falls; Lead Actors Timothy Hutton, Lara Flynn Boyle, Dwight Schultz,



Oliver Platt, Faye Dunaway  
A terrific psychological thriller which knocks similar mainstream movies (*The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, *The Guardian*) into a cocked-hat. Lara Flynn Boyle is excellent as the temporary secretary from hell, intent on taking over her boss' life. Although the formula is well-worn, Holland leads us through the inevitable set-pieces with aplomb, performing a fine balancing act between the ludicrous and the credible. Boyle confirms her reputation as a major talent and the plot is full of nice twists.

Retail

**Ace High (I quattro dell'Ave Maria)**  
Director Giuseppe Colizzi; Italy 1968; CIC Video W2116; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
Poor dubbing mars this uneventful Spaghetti Western with Eli Wallach's talents wasted after his performance in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. Cacopoulos (Wallach) takes revenge on various baddies. Aka *Asso piglia tutto*/Have Gun Will Travel/Revenge at El Paso/Revenge in El Paso (MFB No. 431)

**All I Want for Christmas**  
Director Robert Lieberman; USA 1991; CIC Video C2600; Price £10.99; Certificate U  
A young girl enlists the help of a department store Santa in an attempt to get her divorced parents back together again in time for Christmas. Lauren Bacall co-stars as the children's grandmother along with Leslie Nielsen as Santa. (S&S February 1992)

**American Me**  
Director Edward James Olmos; USA 1992; CIC Video D1576; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S Video February 1993)

**Body Parts**  
Director Eric Red; USA 1991; CIC Video A2566; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S Video July 1992)

**Blue**  
Director Derek Jarman; UK 1993; Artificial Eye ART 082; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15  
Jarman, at his experimental best in this challenging meditation set against an unchanging blue 'canvas' (screen). The director (with the help of narration by Tilda Swinton, Nigel Terry and John Quentin) contemplates the colour blue, laments lost friends and relates his experience of having Aids. The voices are punctuated by sound effects and music. Unforgettable. (S&S October 1993)

**Brain Donors**  
Director Dennis Dugan; USA 1992; CIC Video C2632; Price £10.99; Certificate PG  
(S&S Video January 1993)

**Bram Stoker's Dracula**  
Director Francis Ford Coppola; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVR 24590; Price £12.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S February 1993) ☐

**Cool As Ice**  
Director David Kellog; USA 1991; CIC Video M1546; Price £10.99; Certificate PG  
(S&S Video February 1993)



Boy with a movie camera: 'Jacquot de Nantes'

**Cool World**  
Director Ralph Bakshi; USA 1992; CIC Video S2625; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
(S&S January 1993)

**Doctor Petiot**  
Director Christian de Chalonge; France 1990; Electric Pictures EP 0014; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15  
Stylish, macabre account of a serial killer operating in occupied Paris. Dr Petiot leaps into the screen of a black and white horror film and then takes the lead in a black nightmare of his own making – killing patients and tirelessly trying to dispose of the body parts. (S&S October 1991)

**Don Giovanni**  
Director Joseph Losey; France/Italy/West Germany 1979; Artificial Eye ART OP2; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate PG;  
Location setting, extraordinary costume and visual design combine with fine performances from lead opera singers Ruggero Raimondi and Kiri Te Kanawa to make this a fittingly visual realisation of Mozart's seminal tragic comedy. (MFB No. 560)

**The Erotic Adventures of the Three Musketeers**  
Director Norman Apstein; USA 1992; Video Gems NR 5023; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S Video January 1993)

**Goin' South**  
Director Jack Nicholson; USA 1978; CIC Video W2063; Price £10.99; Certificate PG  
No *One Eyed Jacks*, this unusual Western tells the tale of an outlaw saved from the gallows by a spinster, the catch being that he has to marry her. (MFB No. 544)

**He Said, She Said**  
Directors Ken Kwapis, Marisa Silver; USA 1991; CIC Video C2545; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
(S&S Video January 1992)

**Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer**  
Director John McNaughton; USA 1986; Electric Pictures EP 0035; Price £12.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S July 1991)

**The Horror of Frankenstein**  
Director Jimmy Sangster; UK 1970; Lumiere LUM 2015; Price £10.99; Certificate ■■  
Largely successful attempt at recreating the original story as a black comedy. This last of the Hammer series has some fine ghoulish moments. (MFB No. 442)

**Jacquot de Nantes**  
Director Agnès Varda; France 1991; Tartan

Video TVT 1090; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate PG  
Immensely moving tribute to film-maker Jacques Demy by his director wife. Inter-cut with clips of Demy reminiscing is a story based on his childhood in Nantes, beginning with family life for 8-year-old Jacquot and ending with the 18-year-old boy heading to film school. In between we are treated to glimpses of Demy's passion for cinema, his early animation experiments with film and the pressure on him to get a steady job as a car mechanic. (S&S February 1992)

**The Mean Machine**  
Director Robert Aldrich; USA 1974; CIC Video C2020; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
Action pic starring Burt Reynolds. Reynolds is sent to jail for stealing his girlfriend's car and is forced by the warden to assemble a prisoner football team to play against the semi-pro team made up of guards. Otherwise known as *The Longest Yard*. (MFB No. 277)

**Meetings With Remarkable Men**  
Director Peter Brook; USA 1979; Curzon CV 0033; Price £15.99; Certificate U  
Well meaning, if leaden, account of a man's gaining of wisdom by not accepting traditional and facile explanations about the mysteries of nature. Dragan Maksimovic travels through the East. Egypt and to a monastery in the Hindu Kush in his search for the meaning of life. (MFB No. 549)



Trust me, I'm 'Doctor Petiot'

**Mobsters**  
Director Michael Karbelnikoff; USA 1991; CIC Video A1547; Price £10.99; Certificate ■■  
(S&S March 1992)

**Necessary Roughness**  
Director Stan Dragoti; USA 1991; CIC Video C2595; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
(S&S April 1992)

**Night and the City**  
Director Irvin Winkler; USA 1992; First Independent VA 30212; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
(S&S February 1993)

**Once Around**  
Director Lasse Hallström; USA 1991; CIC Video D1496; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
(S&S Video March 1992)

**Parsifal**  
Director Hans Jürgen Syberberg; West Germany 1982; Artificial Eye ART OP1; Price £24.99; Subtitles; Certificate E  
This imaginative kitsch version of Wagner's last opera was made on the hundredth anniversary of its first performance at Bayreuth in 1882, and takes place on and around a giant death mask of the composer. Long takes, back projections, puppets and the playing of Parsifal by both a boy and a girl are some of the film's many avant garde touches. (MFB No. 592)

**Partners**  
Director James Burrows; USA 1982; CIC Video C2102; Price £10.99; Certificate 15  
Puerile comedy thriller written by Francis Weber (*La Cage aux folles*). A straight cop pretends to be homosexual in order to investigate a gay murder. (MFB No. 582)

**The People Under the Stairs**  
Director Wes Craven; USA 1991; CIC Video A1558; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S February 1992)

**The Perfect Weapon**  
Director Mark DiSalle; USA 1991; CIC Video A2568; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S Video March 1992)

**Préparez vos mouchoirs (Get Out Your Handkerchiefs)**  
Director Bertrand Blier; France 1978; Arrow AV 001; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18  
Gérard Depardieu and Patrick Dewaere, Blier's acting pair from *Les Valseuses*, re-team for this amusing tale of a husband who presents his wife with a lover to cure her sexual indifference. (MFB No. 555)

**Psycho III**  
Director Anthony Perkins; USA 1986; CIC Video A1234; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
Poor second sequel which panders to a *Friday the 13th* crowd. Perkins, sitting in the director's chair for the first time, understands his character but gets lost trying to create a suspenseful atmosphere. (MFB No. 634)

**Psycho IV – The Beginning**  
Director Mick Garris; USA 1990; CIC Video A11497; Price £10.99; Certificate 18  
(S&S Video January 1992)

**Pure Luck**  
Director Nadia Tass; USA 1991; CIC Video C1520; Price £10.99; Certificate PG  
(S&S Video October 1992)



## WIND UP

### By Peter Dean

● Fans who recently bought a video copy of Cyril Collard's award-winning 'Les Nuits fauves' ('Savage Nights') may have been surprised to see Jean's fascist lover Sammy playing with the outlawed martial arts weapon nunchakas, or chain sticks. Isn't this the same street-fighting weapon cut from every film released in the UK? The one which recently had to be excised from the climax of the Bruce Lee bio-pic 'Dragon'? The same nunchakas that 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle' Michaelangelo sports and which required 96 alterations in the first 'Turtles' feature?

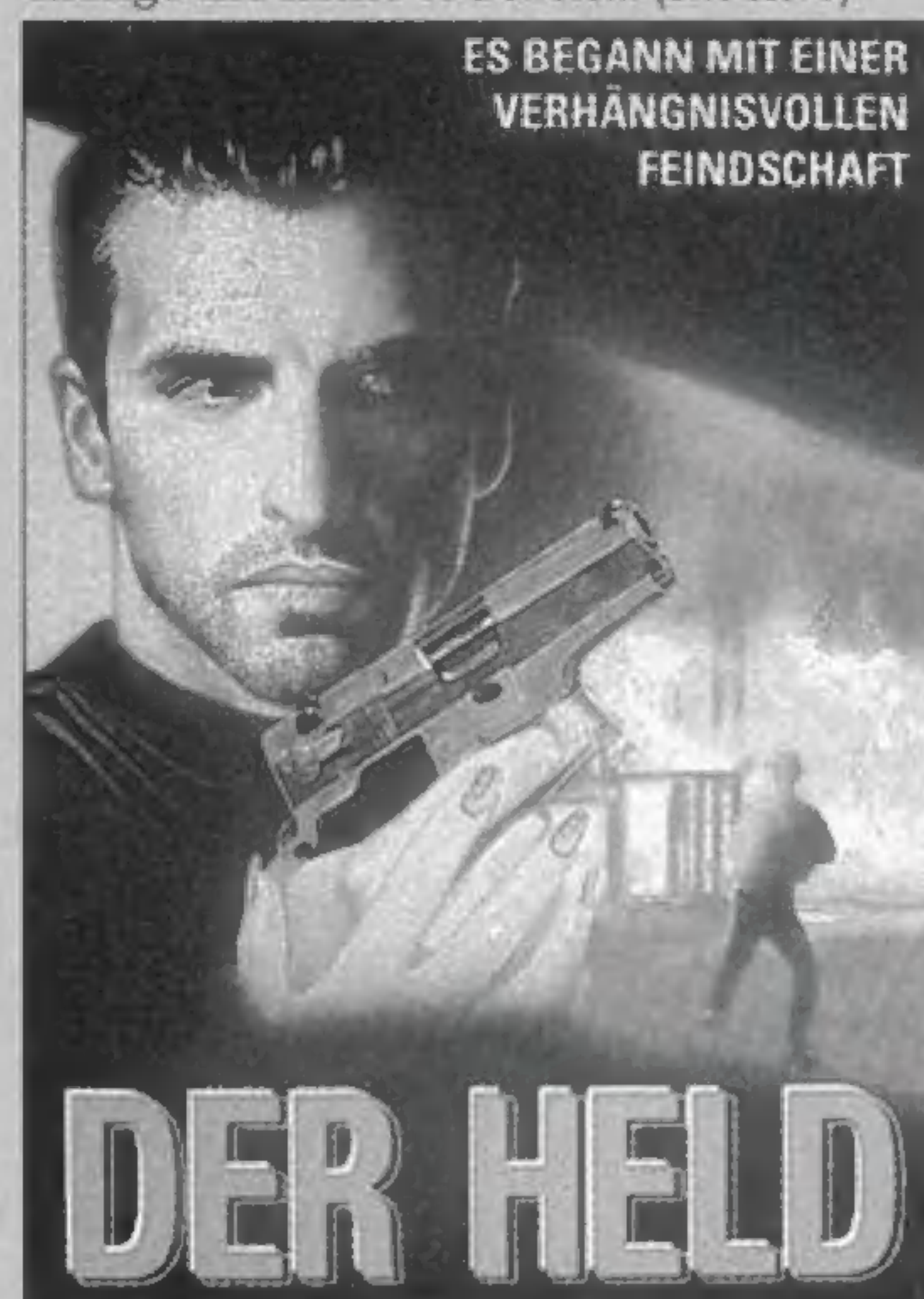
"We don't show street weapons if it encourages the use of them," says BBFC director James Ferman. "We make an assessment as to whether that is the intention. With Steven Seagal and Jean Claude Van Damme films we take it much more seriously. It's a question of the emotional pull of that scene. 'Savage Nights' is not a pro-violence film, whereas in 'River's Edge', for example, there was a 12- or 13-year-old boy seen playing with them all the time, clearly going down the slippery slope, which was significant for the character. We always take it out of kids' films, however, because they are more susceptible." This explains why the censor recently asked for 20 seconds to be removed from the latest 'Yogi Bear' cartoon.

Critical acclaim and prestigious festival awards have little commercial leverage when European film is being marketed in the cinema or on video, according to a new 70-page report on the commercial disappointment of Belgian/French/German co-production *Toto le héros*. Commissioned by Espace Vidéo Européen to better the understanding of the market potential of art-house on video, the report concluded that "when considering a film that might be perceived as art-house or difficult, the majority of cinema-goers and video buyers are not influenced by critics. Indeed the impact of the reviews could even be to make people wary of a film."

*Toto* managed just 1 million box-office admissions and sold less than 10,000 videos across eight major European markets. In Germany it earned less than half the average takings for a European film despite winning three awards at Cannes including the Caméra d'Or, four Felix awards and a César. Although major awards do help producers and agents sell film and video rights to international distributors, this does not follow through to major exhibitors, who may well prefer to screen the latest Hollywood offering – with or without an award. And as for the paying public the report found that what most influences them is the name of a film and its marketing image. Most Europeans thought *Toto* was a children's film. Unfortunately for director Jaco van Dormael, *Toto* is the name of a famous clown, a dog and a children's comedian on the continent. The main European marketing image for the film supported these childish connotations. The image most widely used was one "hastily" assembled (according to the film's sales agent Alexander Heylen) for Cannes, which showed the young *Toto* holding a toy plane in front of a starry sky, with the film's title written in mock 'superhero' bold, yellow lettering. With no set photographer and little other marketing material (according to distributors listed in the report), it was difficult to change the film's image –

especially after it won at Cannes.

It is almost impossible to change an eponymous film title to anything even vaguely similar-sounding, and this film had won a prestigious award with a distinctive (if misleading) image. The UK distributor Electric Pictures was praised in the report for the way it created a new image complemented by a press quote which tried to explain what *Toto* was about. How difficult this can be is proved by the example of German distributor VCL/Carolco. Dismayed that the film had flopped in the cinemas, it decided to change the name to *Der Held* (*The Hero*)



Alias 'Toto le héros'

and the sleeve image to that of an action movie. Action fans were disappointed that the contents of the video didn't match with the sleeve, while those looking for *Toto le héros* couldn't find it in the stores. The final word on the success or failure of European films comes from Danny Geys of Iblis Films, the producer of *Toto*: "either there is no success or, if there is, it is an accident."

● One in the eye for the nine pm television watershed. The BBFC has decided that Robbie Coltrane's detective series 'Cracker' screened on ITV at 9pm is only suitable on video for 18-year olds and over. Of course all 17-year olds would be safely tucked up in bed well before nine o'clock. The video company was banking on a 15 certificate and had to delay the release by a week as a result of the rating.

The *Jungle Book* has become the best-selling video in the UK with four million copies, ordered in the first two weeks of its release. *Beauty and the Beast* shipped 2.5 million three months earlier, totalling a handsome £97 million net.

● Video Distributors often get tarred with the brush of sensationalism and bad taste. But consider this scenario; Connoisseur Video has brought out two early Fellini classics this month – 'The White Sheik' and 'Lights of Variety' – essential accompaniments to the earlier release of '8½' and Electric Pictures' 'La dolce vita'. The wine trade, on the other hand, has honoured il Maestro somewhat differently. Schuler Wine St Jakob's Cellars now have a Tuscan chianti called Fellini. Its press release proudly declares that "It's a brand new star... making its British premiere to bring you a precious personal taste of La Dolce Vita... A star wine at a star price, Fellini is right up everyone's strada... claim your share of the sweet life Fellini guarantees." Worth pointing out that the videos have been on schedule for six months and more.

#### Shout

Director Jeffrey Hornaday; USA 1991; CIC Video A1; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S Video September 1992)

#### Soapdish

Director Michael Hoffman; USA 1991; CIC Video C2554; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S September 1991)

#### We're No Angels

Director Neil Jordan; USA 1989; CIC Video C2428; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 Irish director Jordan doesn't cope well with his first big-budget American movie. A needless remake, although the pairing of Robert De Niro and Sean Penn does throw up occasional pleasures. (MFB No. 677)

#### White Palace

Director Luis Mandoki; USA 1990; CIC Video D1501; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 Embarrassing romance with James Spader's yuppie falling for Susan Sarandon's acerbic waitress despite their obvious differences and the age gap between them. (MFB No. 687)

## Retail Premiere

#### The Attendant/Caught Looking

Western Connection WRST 007; Price £14.99; Certificate 18

#### The Attendant

Director Isaac Julien; UK 1992; B/W A middle-aged museum attendant fantasises about gay S&M group sex while his unhappily married self sings arias in an opera house. (S&S April 1993)

#### Caught Looking

Director Constantine Giannaris; UK 1991; 35 minutes; Producer Rebecca Dobbs; Screenplay Paul Hallam; Lead Actors Louis Selwyn, Ken Geary, Jonathon Kemp Wry, finely-written comedy about a male voyeur who plays an interactive computer game which allows him to participate in gay 'fantasy' scenarios such as sailors on shore leave, toilet cruising and a muscle man photo shoot.

#### Boys on Film 2:

#### Relax/Tell Me No Lies/To Play or to Die

Dangerous To Know DTK 008; Price £14.99; Certificate 18

#### Relax

Director Christopher Newby; UK 1991; 23 minutes; Producer Mehdi Norowzian; Screenplay Christopher Newby; Lead Actors Philip Rosch, Grant Oatley Exceptional short about a young gay man awaiting the results of an Aids test. The direction, especially the camera work and an imaginative nightmare sequence, is worthy of a more mainstream audience. The film makes clever use of monochrome images intercut with a microscope's view of red corpuscles racing through Rosch's veins. Newby – who has since directed the feature 'Anchoress' – is definitely a name to watch.

#### Tell Me No Lies

Director Neil Hunter; UK 1992; 30 minutes; Producers Tom Hunsinger, Neil Hunter; Screenplay Neil Hunter; Lead Actors Matthew Flynn, John Roberts, Mike Bradley, Tracey Wood The sexual awakenings and preferences of a group of student journalists is handled with wit but with little cinematic style.

#### To Play or to Die (Spelen of Sterven)

Director Frank Krom; Holland 1990; 47 minutes; Subtitles; Producers Dave Schram, Hans Pos, Maria Peters, Jose Steen; Screenplay Anne van de Putte, Frank Krom; Lead Actors Geert Hunaerts, Tjebbo Gerritsma, Diane Lensink Ambitious adaptation of Anna Blaman's story about a bullied schoolboy and his retreat into madness after rejection from a boy he adores at school.

#### Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood

Director Karl Buechler; USA 1989; CIC Video A2300; Price £10.99; Certificate 18; 85 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Lar Park Lincoln, Terry Kiser Decent sequel with Jason returning to find a mentally disturbed teenager with telekinetic powers waiting for him. The two battle it out to decide who'll star in Part VIII.

#### Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan

Director Rob Hedden; USA 1989; CIC Video A2366; Price £10.99; Certificate 18; 97 minutes; Producer Randolph Cheveland; Screenplay Rob Heden; Lead Actors Jensen Daggett, Scott Reeves, Peter Mark Richman Disappointing sequel with the indestructible Jason terrorising a group of teenagers aboard a liner headed for New York. Very little is actually staged in New York.

#### Paternity

Director David Steinberg; USA 1981; CIC Video C2048; Price £10.99; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producers Lawrence Gordon, Hank Moonjean; Screenplay Charles Peters; Lead Actors Burt Reynolds, Lauren Hutton, Elizabeth Ashley, Beverly D'Angelo Tiresome comedy about a broody man (Burt Reynolds) who hires a waitress (Beverly D'Angelo) to bear his child.

#### Trust Me

Director Robert Houston; USA 1988; Fabulous FAR 04062; Price £10.99; Certificate 15; 91 minutes; Producer George Edwards; Screenplay Robert Houston, Gary Rigdon; Lead Actors Adam Ant, David Packer, Talia Balsam Adam Ant will have good cause to regret the unearthing of this tiresome murder thriller, in which an art gallery owner tries to avoid bankruptcy by buying up the works of a great artist before killing him.

#### Projections

Director Derek Jarman; UK 1993; Artificial Eye ART 090; Price £12.99; Certificate PG; 46 minutes; Producer James Mackay; Music Pet Shop Boys A collection of seven films which Derek Jarman directed for back-projection on the pop group Pet Shop Boys' first world tour in 1989, together with two excerpts from the director's first film *Studio Bankside* (1970) and *A Garden in Luxor* (1972). The tour films are a wonderful imaginative collage, with Jarman clearly relishing his freedom from narrative. *Paninaro*, for example, conjures up the world of an Italian scooter kid using for its background faded and filtered prints of Jarman's Italian home movies and close-ups that look like they belong to a glam photo shoot. The ad hoc black – and – white shots of pre-punk London in *Studio Bankside* pack an emotional punch, blending with scratchy images of Jarman's friends.



Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

## Truth and Tina

From Charlie Gillett

I went to see *What's Love Got to Do With It* with mixed expectations, thanks to Hollywood's sorry reputation for turning every bio-pic into an implausible fairy story. But people whose judgment I respect liked it, including Cynthia Rose (S&S October).

Sure enough, the performances of Laurence Fishburne and Angela Bassett as Ike and Tina Turner are marvellous, both of them conveying plausible characters and doing great jobs of miming the vocals. In its treatment of the relationship between them, the film literally pulls no punches.

But once again, I came away from a film which is nominally based on a 'true story' feeling irritated by the sometimes whimsical, sometimes wilful, disregard for reality. Tina Turner's story, first with Ike and then without him, is a real and rare example of 'and Cinderella lived happily ever after'. It did not need to be sugared with unnecessary embellishments, inconsistencies and improbabilities which undermined our trust and made us wonder, is there any truth in this tale, or is it mostly a fictional rewrite, twisted to suit the film's ambitions as an allegory?

For instance, behind a subtitle that read "New York, 1960", the billing outside the Apollo in Harlem showed three acts: Otis Redding, Ike and Tina Turner, Martha and the Vandellas. Otis made his Apollo debut in 1962 and was unlikely to have headlined until 1965 at the earliest; Martha and the Vandellas were all still at school in Detroit in 1960, and didn't play the Apollo until 1963. Ike and Tina did have a record out in 1960, and played the Apollo that year, but why make up an impossible bill? The information is so easy to check, one is bound to wonder – what did the film-makers gain by this fiction, and what else did they make up?

Throughout the film, Ike is seen operating home-based recording sessions with an amateur disregard for acoustics. A 'home studio' normally means having a dedicated room for recording, rather than scattering equipment through the living quarters as shown in the film. Stacking all the emotional cards against him, *What's Love Got to Do With It* wants us to believe that he was naive as well as nasty.

Cynthia Rose reports that Laurence Fishburne insisted on opening up the one-dimensional stereotype that had been scripted for Ike, but the portrait that survives does not allow for the complication that this man who treated women so badly could at the same time have been a proficient record producer. From the start of his career, Ike took care to make his records sound as good as the competition – an attitude which is nowhere reflected.

In the film, Tina sings 'Nutbush City Limits' in a corner of a huge lounge, cut off by glass screens but close to a bubbling fish tank! In reality, by 1972 Ike had set up a state-of-the-art recording suite called Bolic Sound at one end of his house, completely separate from his garish living quarters.

From a production point of view, 'Nutbush' was a pioneering record.

In Tina's autobiography *I, Tina*, on which the film is substantially based, there is a crucial exchange which is left out of the film. At the meeting where Tina invites Roger Davies to manage her, Davies asks Tina what her ambition is. When she tells him what she wants to do, he says he thinks he can help her to achieve it – but only if she agrees to follow his advice, even when she doesn't think it's the right thing to do.

It's a very significant moment – Tina has to decide whether to put her career in the hands of a man, again. But whereas previously the man to whom she left decisions was Evil Ike, who had his own agenda, now she entrusts herself to Visionary Roger, confident that he has her interests at heart. And her decision is vindicated.

The film closes with the real Tina Turner singing a live version of 'What's Love Got to Do With It' which she speeds up and hams up, making it hard to understand how this could have been the song that relaunched her career. At the very moment at which it should have been revelatory, the film drifts into cliché.

The missing scene is what happened at the recording session for 'What's Love Got to Do With It'. Here, Tina said she didn't understand what the song was about, it didn't suit her, she couldn't even learn the words. But she stuck to her promise to Davies and sang it, reading the lyrics off the page. It's hard to believe she wasn't convinced by the song – the record was a pop masterpiece, with Tina holding back emotion in the verses, letting out the stops in the chorus.

In most cases when a singer doesn't recognise a song's potential, the song doesn't get sung – the singer's ego wins. If Tina had stuck to her guns and refused to do it, she would not have resurfaced in such a spectacular way. By allowing Roger Davies to 'win', she 'won' too. As Davies was a co-producer of the film, perhaps he made the decision to underplay his own role. If so, his misplaced modesty robs us of an important piece of the jigsaw, because what we get instead is another typical Hollywood anticlimactic ending, with success seeming to be a foregone conclusion.

You don't have to work in the entertainment business to know that success is never inevitable.

London SW4

## Woody vs the dinosaurs

From David Neilson

A few observations on the French box office, after your GATT editorial (S&S November).

Where the French played the cultural card in the GATT debate, much was made of the swamping of available screens by *Jurassic Park*. Three weeks after opening in Paris, *Jurassic Park* can still be seen on 21 screens. This is on an even par with the other wing of American cultural imperialism, Woody Allen. *Manhattan Murder Mystery* is still showing on 20 screens, four weeks after opening. So that weedy little guy from New York, with all his recent bad press, seems to be doing OK against Spielberg's McDonald's-sponsored dinosaurs.

Even more interesting is evidence that

the British film industry is alive and well, and living in France. The new films from Ken Loach, Mike Leigh and Stephen Frears are between them showing on 30 Parisian screens. All three films were treated as 'events' by the French media, with slots on the main evening news and extended reviews in the various television cinema programmes.

Strasbourg, France

## Addio Federico

From Carlos A. Ycaza

I have just received your December issue of *Sight and Sound*, which includes the magnificent Scorsese piece on Fellini. I only want to add that yes, there was a sadness at the end, not only because there was no money to back him up, but also because there were most of the critics lining up all over Europe and America, always ready to put him down at the bottom of the movie spectrum.

As a subscriber and collector of *Sight and Sound* for almost three decades, I feel that the magazine has a tremendous responsibility to rescue this great maestro of all movie-makers from the tragic oblivion of his last years.

Guayaquil, Ecuador

**Editor's note:** A Fellini filmography is featured in this issue.

## Darke reflections

From Dr Susan Hayward

I read Chris Darke's review of my recent publication (S&S December) with interest, but wish to respond to one or two points which I consider are either incorrect or are out of line with the modest intention of the book.

Darke devotes two paragraphs to addressing the debate in the UK and France as to the merits or dismerits of Leos Carax as auteur. My book makes it clear that I do not consider him to be one (in a very short paragraph) and that I contest *Cahiers du cinéma's* evident desire to make him into one (perhaps because French cinema of the 80s seems so desperately short of *real* auteurs). I am curious as to why Darke should give so much space to a director who is a minor consideration within my book.

Second, I take issue with Darke's assertion that some of my analyses "fall prey to a reflectionism that sees films as more or less transparent mediators of ideology". I would have hoped that I had been more sophisticated than that and that I had demonstrated at the very least that it was a case of cross-reflectionism.

I do agree that my comments on the post-modern cinema of the 80s are strident. However, they are not, as Darke claims, inflected by the *Cahiers du cinéma* debate. Rather, they reflect a grave concern at the images of sexism, ageism and racism so prevalent in that cinema (areas not addressed in the *Cahiers* discourses). That this cinema should be so much one of conservative backlash and hate should cause great concern.

University of Birmingham

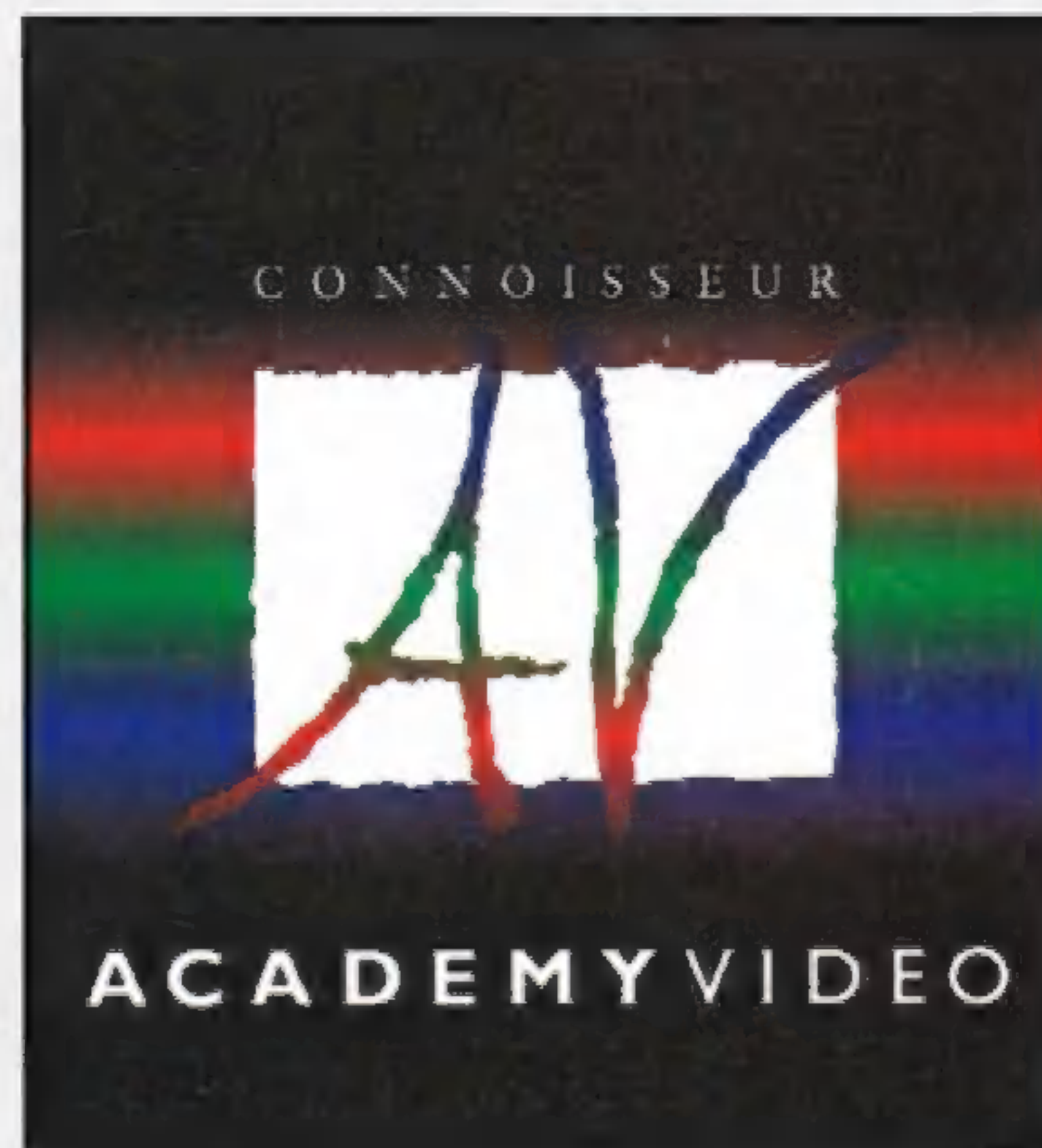
## Correction

**December 1993:** The film *The Concierge* reviewed in this issue was released in the US as *For Love or Money*.



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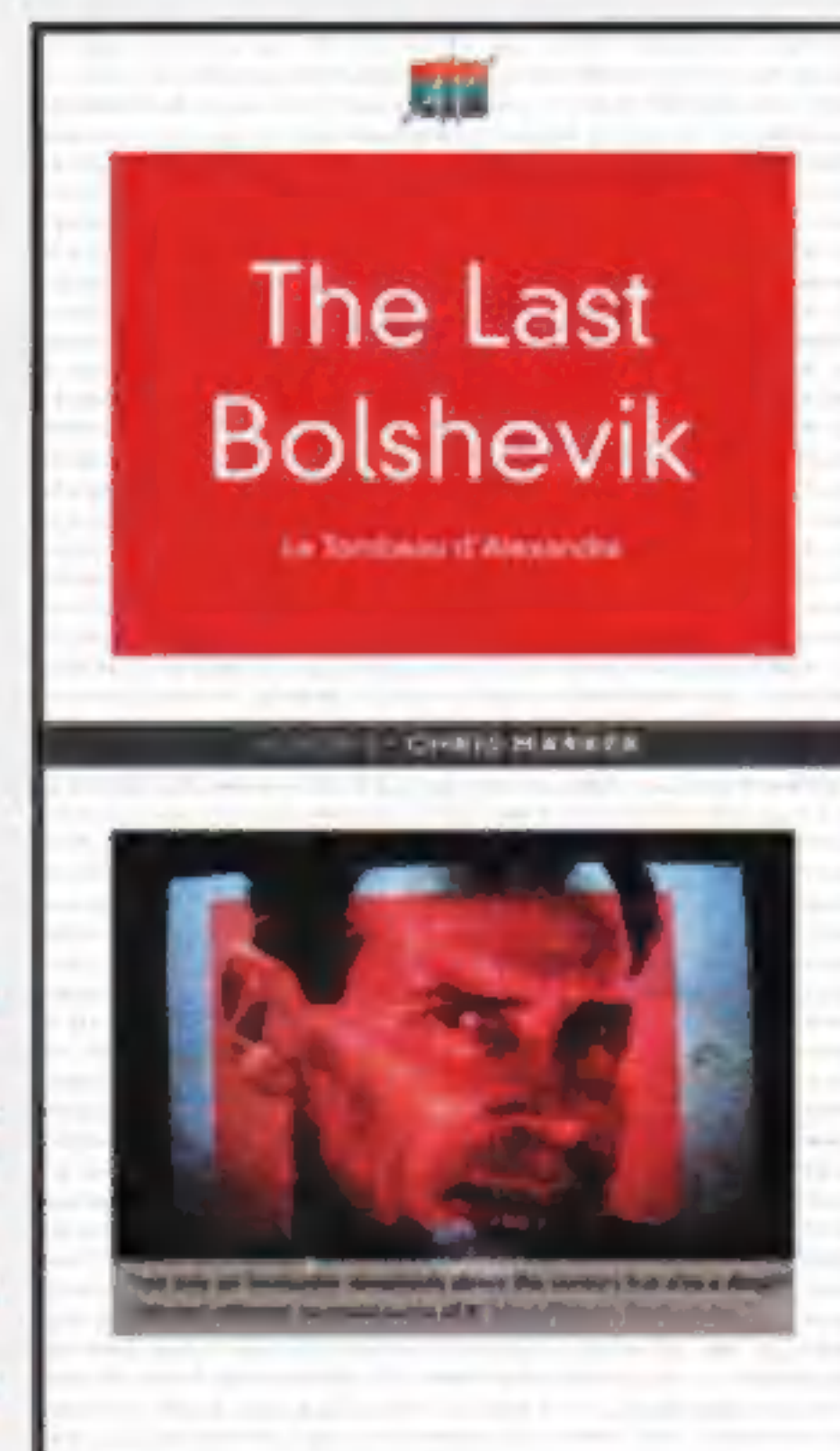
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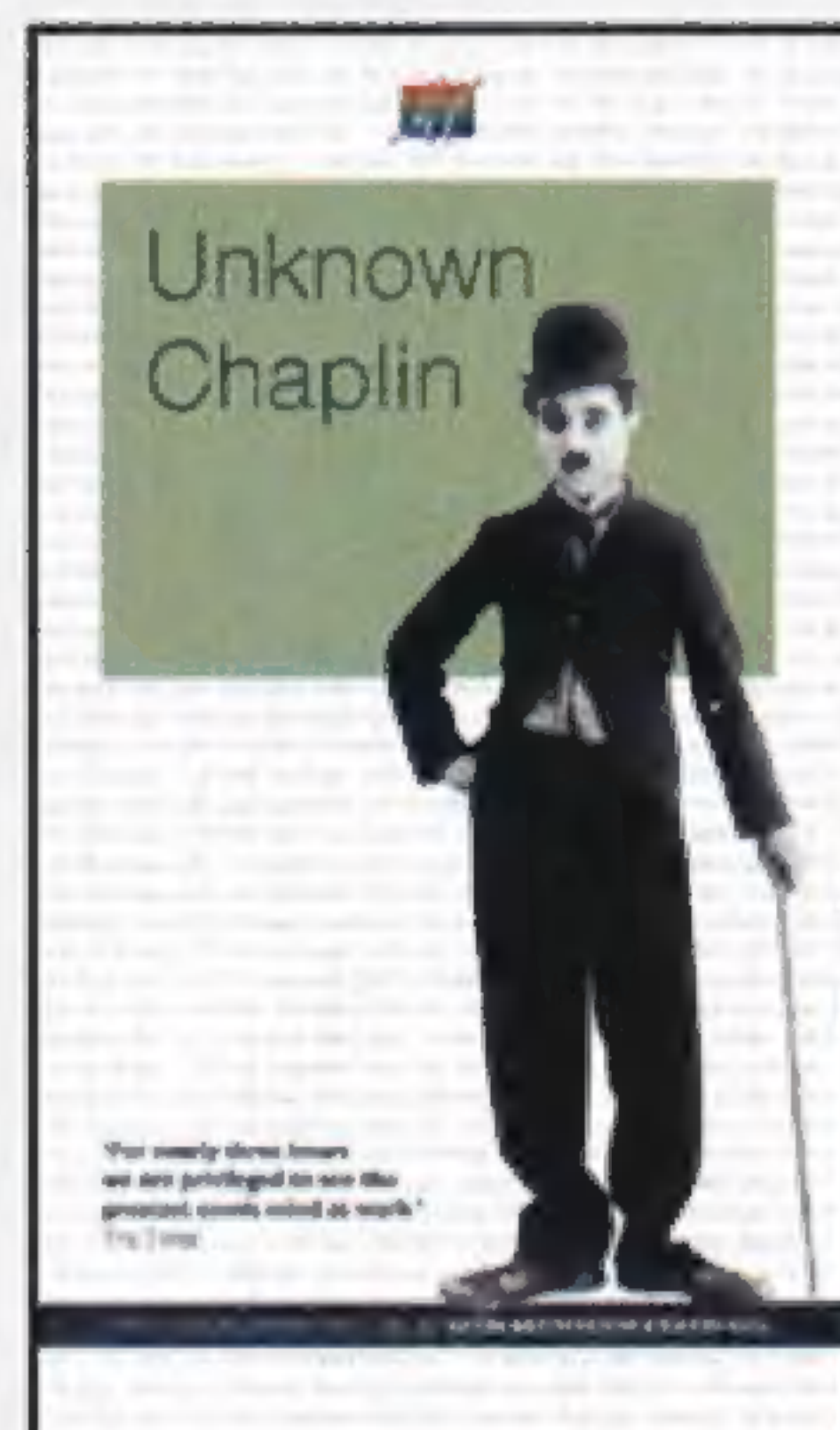


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